SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025 SERVING NILES, BUCHANAN AND EDWARDSBURG

Niles Daily Star

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Stay Safe

Be mindful of your surroundings, especially in unfamiliar or dimly lit areas. Trust your instincts - if something feels off, move to a safer location if possible. Encourage neighbors to establish a neighborhood watch program to keep our communities safe.

Berrien County Sheriff's Office
Crime Prevention Unit
919 Port Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085
(269) 983-7141 Ext. 7221
www.bcsheriff.org

Sheriff, Chuck Heit

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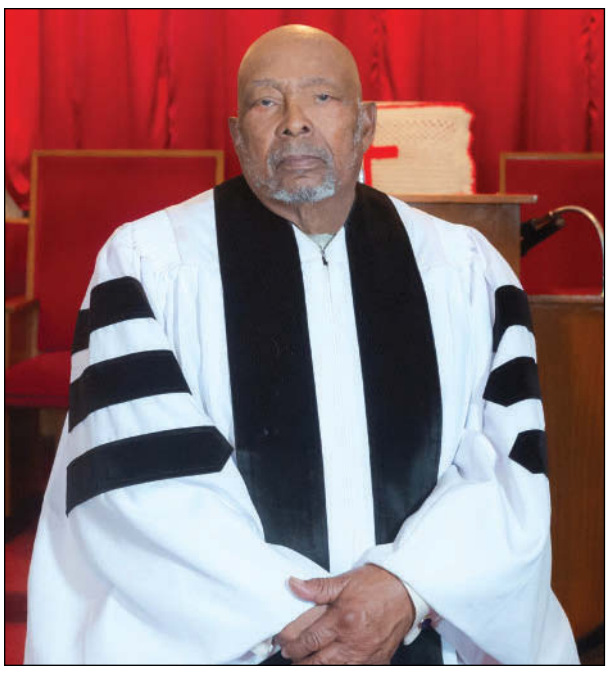

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Pastor Fletcher E. McAfee

Niles pastor to celebrate 50 years of ministry

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A Niles pastor will be celebrating a milestone this weekend.

Fletcher E. McAfee will be honored this week for 50 years of pastoring at Mt. Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Niles. The celebration will culminate on Sunday, April 13 at New Bethel Baptist Church, 2272 Townline Rd., Benton Harbor.

Pastor McAfee has spent the last five decades serving as a spiritual shepherd to generations, known for his powerful preaching, unwavering faith and compassionate leadership. Beyond the pulpit, Pastor McAfee and his family were actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement, participating in marches and protests that helped reshape local communities and advance justice and equality. A devoted community activist, he has tirelessly worked to uplift the lives of others through both spiritual and social action.

In addition to his pastoral and civil rights work, Pastor McAfee is a successful entrepreneur and the founder of McAfee Construction, a well-respected general contracting company that has served the region with integrity and excellence for many years.

Festivities began Saturday, April 6, with a week of celebration that will highlight his contributions to faith, community, and civil service. The grand culmination will take place on April 13 at New Bethel Baptist Church, where friends, family, congregants, and community members will gather to celebrate his legacy.

For more information or to RSVP, please contact Alice Williams at (310) 871-0784.

Niles township ironing out marijuana ordinance details ahead of April 21 vote

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — After seven years of observing the ever-changing Michigan cannabis industry, Niles Charter Township will soon be tossing its hat into the ring.

The township's proposed Recreational (Adult Use) Marijuana Establishment Ordinance and its amended zoning ordinance will be considered for adoption by the Niles Charter Township Board at its next regular meeting to be held at 7 p.m. Monday April 21.

Township Supervisor Marge Durm-Hiatt said the zoning ordinance amendment and marijuana ordinance have been turned over to the Berrien County Planning Commission for approval prior to the April 21 vote. Changes to the ordinances can be made prior to the final approval on April 21.

"After the 21st, things are going to start moving," Durm-Hiatt said. "We'll have applications very soon after that."

The board voted unanimously Monday to amend the proposed marijuana ordinance to go into effect seven days after approval. It was originally set to go into effect immediately following approval. The board made the amendment to allow the marijuana ordinance to go into effect the same time as its zoning ordinance amendment, which is set for seven days after approval (April 28).

The proposed ordinance establishes that the township is now opting in to allowing for recreational marijuana establishments and requires that all recreational marihuana establishments follow all state regulations as well as local rules and regulations. It also establishes the parameters for the permitting process and calls for the establishment of licensing fees and limitations on the number of licenses.

The application fee will be set at $5,000 for each requested license for a recreational (adult use) Marijuana establishment within the Township.

There will be three types of marijuana establishments available:

- An unlimited number of retailers
- One secure transporter establishment
- One safety compliance facility

The following would not be authorized and would not operate within the boundaries and jurisdiction of the township:

- Growers
- Processors
- Microbusinesses
- Event Organizers
- Temporary marijuana events
- Consumption establishments
- Excess grower licenses

See VOTE, Page A8

MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE

S & J Customs opens in downtown Niles

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — A new business aims to provide customers with quality, custom items in the heart of downtown Niles.

S & J Customs, 101 E. Main St., opened its doors for the first time Tuesday morning. Owned by Samantha Campbell and Jayden Garza, S & J customs offers a wide variety of custom screen and sublimation printing, signs, accessories and more from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday. The business will host an official ribbon-cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. Saturday.

"We want to be able to make everybody's dream come true," Garza said. "What they can't get anywhere else or instead of having to pay a big price, they can

See XXX, Page A8

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Jayden Garza and Samantha Campbell pose for a photo Tuesday inside of their new business venture, S&J Customs.

6 54708 09550 1

YMCA of Greater Michiana assumes ownership of Niles Montessori Program

COMMUNITY REPORT

NILES — The YMCA of Greater Michiana and Niles Community Schools have announced an upcoming transition in the operation of the Montessori Program at Northside Child Development Center.

Beginning this fall, the YMCA will assume ownership and management of the program at Northside, a long-standing shared space with Niles Community Schools. Northside is currently home to the YMCA's Child Care Network and Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) Preschool, as well as the school district's Montessori and special education programs.

"This transition supports the continued availability of Montessori education in our community while aligning with the YMCA's long-standing role in early childhood development," said Dr. Zechariah Hoyt, Executive Director of Youth Development, YMCA of Greater Michiana. "Montessori classrooms emphasize student-led learning and exploration, an approach that fits well with our commitment to fostering academic and social

See YMCA, Page A8

OBITUARIES

Jeanne Marie Horner
Beatrice Hunsicker
Russell Lynn Staples
George Edward Bond
David James Hayslip
Johannes Marais
Elsie Lucile West
Warren R. Davis
Geraldine Mooney
Linda Preston
Donald E. Johnson
A6

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

"Keep your ego out of my 401K." A2

Brandywine's Adeline Gill makes D3 AP team B1

FRANKLY

TIPS, QUIPS, AND BLIPS

What is Frankly? It is where readers sound off on issues of the day. Have a tip, quip or blip? Call or text Frankly at 219-455-2349 or email rich.cains@leaderpub.com

Democrats need to grow up! Republicans won the election. Quit your whining and crying. Trump can't fix Biden's mistakes overnight. Biden nearly ruined our country.

Keep your ego out of my 401K.

Happy Liberation Day. Pain and suffering for 2 years? Really?

Golfing while losing 10 trillion in American wealth in a week? Are you kidding me?

Countries have been ripping off the US for years. It's about time someone with a spine finally stood up.

Looks like reckoning day may be arriving much sooner than expected. Is Donald Trump a great businessman or a great fraudster who poses as a businessman? The economy doesn't lie, but everyone else will.

Have faith in American democracy. We have power with the people and that will never change.

Be nice to your neighbors, a day will come when you may need their help. But, don't be nice just because you may want a favor. Do it because it is always the right thing to do, no matter what.

WEATHER

SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
Sunny	Partly Cloudy	40% Chance of Storms	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	30% Chance of Rain
55° 41°	60° 53°	60° 43°	44° 34°	46° 34°	51° 43°

'ROOM TO GROW'

SMC announces new wrestling facility, arts building upgrades

Courtesy of Southwestern Michigan College

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College announced two construction projects today: an expansion of the Charles O. Zollar Building to include a brand-new wrestling room for the Roadrunners and upgrades to the Dale A. Lyons Building to improve music facilities for faculty, students and the community.

"For over a decade, SMC's mission has included giving our students a total college life experience," said Tom Jerdon, Board of Trustees Chair. "Athletics and performing arts are critical pieces of that experience, and based on attendance and enthusiasm, we know that the local community fully supports them. These projects will leverage existing buildings to expand opportunities for current and future students, and they will be completed responsibly without imposing any additional debt on taxpayers. This is a very exciting day for our college."

A new 11,195-square-foot wing of the Zollar Building will quadruple the space available to the men's and women's wrestling teams. It will double the mat capacity for practice sessions and provide additional competition space for hosting conference and regional meets. The new facility will also include a dedicated fitness and warm-up area, coaches' offices, locker rooms and additional restrooms. Multiple contractor bids were opened at a public meeting of the Board of Trustees on Feb. 26, and the project was awarded to E & L Construction of Flint, Mich., a week later. On-site work is slated to begin in April 2025, with a groundbreaking ceremony scheduled for May 2025 and occupancy targeted for February 2026.

After SMC Wrestling moves from its current practice space in the Lyons Building to its new home in Zollar, updates to the Lyons Building will begin in Summer 2026. Planned improvements for the music programs include a redesigned choir room with enhanced acoustics; a 1,980-square-foot expansion of the band room to accommodate 20 additional members and provide a dedicated Jazz Ensemble space; remodeling of six practice rooms, four ensemble rooms and a multi-purpose classroom; plus renovations to Lyons' main bathrooms and lobby area. These phased upgrades

See ROOM, Page A8

A rendering of the redesigned Lyons Building band room.

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
A rendering of the proposed SMC wrestling room.

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ACHIEVEMENT
RESPONSIBILITY
TEAMWORK

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Niles Community Health Center
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www.cassfamilyclinic.org
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Cassopolis Family Clinic Network is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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The Cass County COA has outstanding fitness centers at both locations. Each center offers a variety of cardiovascular fitness machines and weight training equipment as well as In-Person and Zoom Fitness Classes. Trained instructors provide assistance, advice and class instruction to help you meet your fitness goals.

• Balance, Stretch & Stability • Cardio Challenge
• H.I.L.I.T. • S.E.A.T. • Tai Chi • Yoga

Cass County COA
Enhancing Life

(800) 323-0390 | (269) 445-8110
www.CassCOA.org
facebook.com/CassCOA

Lowe Center
60525 Decatur Rd.
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Front Street Crossing
227 S. Front Street
Dowagiac, MI 49047

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Protesters rally in Niles against possible Social Security cuts

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — Approximately 80 protesters gathered in front of Representative Tim Walberg's Niles office Monday afternoon to voice their concerns over potential cuts to Social Security.

Seniors with the Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans demanded Walberg to take action to make sure Social Security is not impacted by Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE).

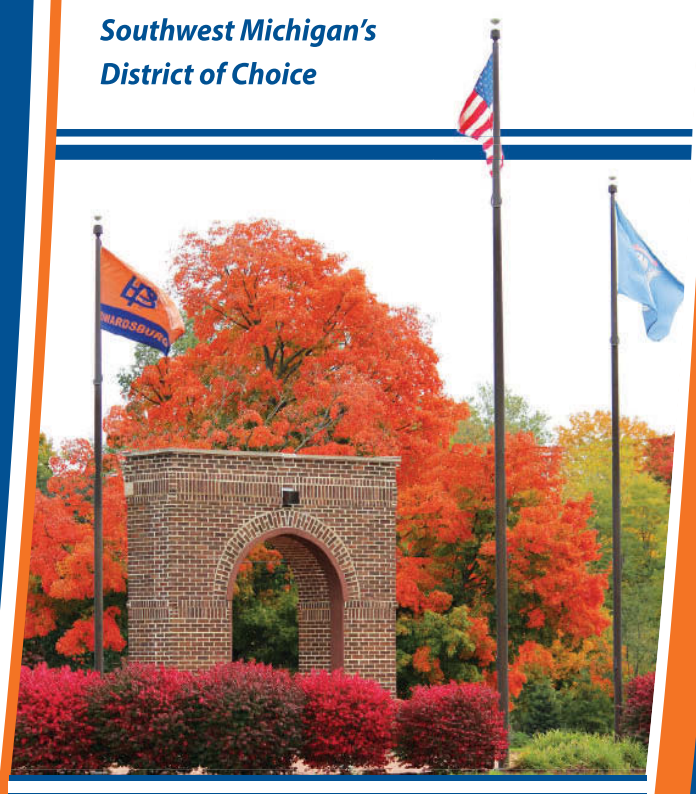
"Since this Administration took office, the Social Security Administration has cut more than 10 percent of its workforce, announced it will close 47 local and regional offices, and eliminate telephone services for people claiming retirement or survivor benefits," said Jim Pedersen, president of the Michigan Alliance for Retired Americans. "These changes are not making Social Security more efficient or eliminating fraud. They are making it harder for people to claim the benefits they have earned over a lifetime of work and pave the way for privatization of Social Security – a position Rep. Walberg supports."

In addition to protesters, a counter-protest took place across the street to voice support for President Donald Trump, Walberg and Senator Jonathan Lindsey, stating they do not believe SS will be impacted.

Edwardsburg Public Schools

Pride
Passion
Purpose

Southwest Michigan's District of Choice



FAST FACTS:

- *National Blue Ribbon Recipients*
- *Now Offering Young 5's Program*
- *Before & After School Care Available*
- *Fiscally Responsible and Financially Stable*
- *Leading the Area in State and National Assessments*

FIRST SEMESTER 2025-2026 SCHOOL OF CHOICE OPENINGS

Y5/Kindergarten	Unlimited	Seventh Grade	4
First Grade	2	Eighth Grade	2
Second Grade	5	Ninth Grade	4
Third Grade	5	Tenth Grade	2
Fourth Grade	2	Eleventh Grade	2
Fifth Grade	2	Twelfth Grade	2
Sixth Grade	10		

Applications are available and being accepted electronically, April 7 - May 2, 2025, at www.edwardsburgpublicschools.org for any Y5/Kindergarten - 12th grade student living in Cass County and contiguous districts in Berrien, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Please complete a separate application for each student.
For more information, contact Kimberly Slack at 269-663-3055 or kslack@goeddies.com.
Additional spots will be considered as they become available.

Hazardous Waste & Tire Collection

Sponsored by Cass County Board of Commissioners

PERMITTED ITEMS

HOME
Aerosols
Ammonia
Batteries (all types)
Carpet Cleaners
CFL & LED Bulbs
Chlorine Bleach
Drain Cleaners
Dyes
Explosives
Floor Care & Wax
Furniture Polish
Lamp Oils
Moth Balls & Flakes
Oven Cleaners
Scouring Powders
Smoke Detectors
Spot & Stain Removers
Spray Dust Cleaners
Upholstery Cleaners

GARAGE
2-cycle Gas Mixes
Antifreeze
Brake Fluid
Car Wax
Compressed Gas Cylinders
Degreasers
Diesel Fuel
Engine Cleaners
Fiberglass Epoxy
Gas/Diesel Additives
Gasoline
Metal Polishes
Passenger Tires
Radiator Flushes
Rubbing Compounds
Starting Fluid
Transmission Fluid

WORKSHOP
Adhesives & Cements
Alcohols
Artist Paints
Creosote
Cutting Oil
Mineral Spirits
Model Paints
Muriatic Acid
Naphtha
Oil Based Paints
Polyurethane Coatings
Rust Remover
Strippers
Sulfuric Acid
Thinners
Varnishes
Wood Preservatives
Wood Stain

GARDEN
Algaecides
Ant & Roach Powder
Bug Sprays
Fertilizers
Fly Strips
Fungicides
Garden Dusts & Sprays
Insecticides
Rat & Rodent Poison
Round Up
Misc. Chemicals

MISCELLANEOUS
Disposable Propane Cylinders (less than 20# tanks)
Dry Cleaning Solvent
Hobby Chemistry Sets
Hot Tub Chemicals
Lighter Fluid
Mercury
Photographic Chemicals
Radioactive Materials
Swimming Pool Chlorine
Thermostats
Thermometers

ITEMS NOT ACCEPTED
Major Appliances
Air Conditioners
Dehumidifiers
Fireworks
Used Motor Oil
Fire Extinguishers
Ammunition
Biohazards
Propane tanks (larger than 20 lbs)
Semi or tractor tires

First 300 lbs of hazardous waste per vehicle: FREE ($1.74/lb after 300 lbs)

Electronics, appliances, metal items, and anything steel will be accepted at no charge.

Proof of Cass County residency required

Wednesday, April 23, 2025
3 to 6 p.m.
No appointment necessary

Cass County Road Commission
340 N. O'Keefe St., Cassopolis, MI

Opinion

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Libraries change lives

Dear editor,

It is not an exaggeration to say South Bend, Indiana's public libraries changed my life for the better. From the time I was young, my mom regularly took my younger brother and me to the main library downtown, where we chose from the large selection of children's books on the third floor. We learned to read with Dr. Suess, The Berenstain Bears, and Hans Christian Andersen among many other favorites. When I got old enough to ride the city bus by myself, I would travel downtown to check out "The Three Investigators" and "Hardy Boys" book series.

In 1976, my mom was hired as Library Assistant at the Virginia Tutt Branch of the St. Joseph Public Library. My brother and I "lived" at that branch, participating in summer reading programs, browsing the bookshelves, and performing our magic tricks at Tutt and other library branches. My mom was the story hour lady at Tutt for years. She passed her love of reading onto her sons, grandchildren, friends, and everyone she encountered. Nothing pleased her more than convincing somebody who didn't read to give it a try.

Public libraries play an essential and positive role in our communities. They make materials, performances, and programs available to everyone, without cost. They host programs on the arts, sciences, as well as practical life skills such as health care and tax preparation. They provide safe indoor spaces and internet access for those without shelter during the day.

Informed, safe, and healthy communities need public libraries. Libraries do change lives for the better. They are worthy of continued public funding.

Sincerely,

Scott Dunham
South Bend, Ind.

NEWS

Dowagiac man gets jail time for fleeing police

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

NILES — Area residents were sentenced to jail and/or probation Monday in Berrien County Trial Court sentencings at the Niles courthouse.

Travis Dontrail Guntle, Jr., 27, of Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to fleeing and eluding police and was sentenced to 365 days in jail with credit for 139 days already served and $198 in fines and costs.

Guntle

The incident occurred June 17, 2024 in Niles.

Guntle's past record include Cass County sentences for assault with intent to commit second-degree criminal sexual conduct, possession of a weapon by a felony and resisting and obstructing police.

Berrien County Assistant Prosecutor Myrene Koch asked for the one year jail sentence, nothing that Guntle is on probation in Cass County and also has a warrant out for him from an Indiana case.

Defense attorney Daniel French said the current case came about because of the "dumb choice" Guntle made. "His car had a loud exhaust and when the fight or flight impulse kicked in, he fled," French said. "It was an offense that was definitely avoidable."

"I know I was wrong, I don't want to make excuses," Guntle said. "I should have stopped, I can't take it back, I should have taken responsibility from the beginning. I'm ready to put this behind me and get on with my life."

Anthony Darnell Haynes, 29, pleaded guilty to carrying a concealed weapon and possession of a firearm/ammunition by a prohibited person and was sentenced to two concurrent terms of 270 days in jail with credit for 150 days already served. He must pay $266 in fines and costs.

Haynes

The incident occurred Nov. 9, 2024 in Niles. His past record includes a 2021 conviction for carrying a concealed weapon and 2015 convictions for home invasion and breaking and entering.

French said Haynes knows he cannot possess a firearm and that these charges were ones he could have easily avoided. "He knows he needs to make better choices moving forward," he said.

Haynes said he took full responsibility and accountability for his actions. "I have had time to reflect on my actions, weapons and court are not for me," he said.

Two women received probation sentences.

Krystal Lynn Kirby, 35, of Coloma, pleaded guilty to larceny in a building and was sentenced to 18 months probation, credit for 27 days already served and $658 in fines and costs.

Kirby

The incident occurred Sept. 6, 2023 at the Firehouse Subs in Niles.

French said Kirby had a difficult childhood and has struggled with a drug addiction. He has recommended her for the trial court's mental health court program. Kirby apologized for her actions and said she has been sober for a while.

Shakayla Michelle McFarland, 22, pleaded guilty to resisting and obstructing police and was sentenced to 18 months probation, 45 days in jail with credit for two days served and $658 in fines and costs. The jail sentence won't be imposed until the end of the probation and could be eliminated if she's successful on probation.

McFarland

The incident occurred Nov. 17, 2024 in Berrien Springs. She also faces charges in Kalamazoo.

French called the incident something outside of McFarland's normal behavior and an overreaction.

Jesse James Hite-Morrison, 23, of Hartford, pleaded guilty to attempted possession of counterfeit bills/coins and was sentenced to credit for 11 days already served, 50 hours of community service and $278 in fines and costs.

Hite-Morrison

The incident occurred Aug. 22, 2024 in Eau Claire.

French said Hite-Morrison has already paid restitution to the victim. "He has a young family, this was a crime of desperation," he said. "He realized it was a loss of judgment. He burned the rest of the counterfeit bills after his interaction with the victim."

"I do note that this is probably an anomaly for you," Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gordon Hosbein said. "I don't expect you will come back and you're already on misdemeanor probation."

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Aging services organizations finalize southwest Michigan partnership

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

ST. JOSEPH — In an effort to grow home- and community-based services available to older adults in the region, Region IV Area Agency on Aging and Brio Living Services have agreed to partner to support the critical community-focused work of the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly of Southwest Michigan.

The new partnership, which went into effect April 1, 2 allows PACE of Southwest Michigan personnel to focus on hands-on, quality care, while many administrative functions will be supported by Brio's extensive team of PACE experts.

"Together, our organizations' ability to share widely recognized best practices, knowledge and administrative leadership will achieve superior outcomes and create more opportunities for local older adults to participate in our program," said Michael Zdrodowski, executive director of PACE of Southwest Michigan. "Our team members can focus on providing the best care possible, while Brio provides administrative support. It's a win-win for all of us."

PACE of Southwest Michigan opened the Day Center in St. Joseph, Michigan in September 2012 and has since served more than 759 total participants. The partnership originally consisted of Corewell Health in Southwest Michigan, Region IV Area Agency on Aging, and Corewell Health Hospice and Palliative Care. Corewell Health will remain as a key community care provider to PACE of Southwest Michigan participants so their care and supports can remain local and close to home.

> "We began with a small team of caregivers, physicians, and social workers, and enrolled 64 participants during our inaugural year. Since then, we have expanded to over 100 professionals who currently serve 250 participants throughout Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties in Southwest Michigan."
> — **Michael Zdrodowski**

"We began with a small team of caregivers, physicians, and social workers, and enrolled 64 participants during our inaugural year," Zdrodowski said. "Since then, we have expanded to over 100 professionals who currently serve 250 participants throughout Berrien, Cass and Van Buren counties in Southwest Michigan. We partner with more than 90 local and regional service providers to ensure that participants can successfully age in their own homes and communities."

This decision follows six months of due diligence that was carefully considered by the boards of PACE of Southwest Michigan, Region IV AAA, and Brio Living Services.

"We are honored to support the vital work of PACE of Southwest Michigan. This partnership aligns seamlessly with our mission of 'Offering Choices for Independent Lives' and expanding home and community-based services (HCBS) options," said Christine Vanlandingham, Region IV Area Agency on Aging CEO. "By assisting individuals in their setting of choice, we enhance their quality of life and ensure they can age with dignity and independence. Our longstanding commitment as a founding partner to PACE of Southwest Michigan emphasizes our dedication to providing comprehensive care and support to older adults within our community."

"We have worked thoughtfully to ensure not just the right skillset fit, but the right ethos and culture fit for all the PACE of Southwest Michigan team members and the people they serve," said Steve Fetyko, Brio Living Services' president and CEO. "We are deeply honored to partner with Region IV Area Agency on Aging to support the wonderful work of PACE of Southwest Michigan and are excited about our future together."

Niles Daily Star

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COMICS & PUZZLES

ADAM

WHO WANTS TO GO FOR A WALK?
I'M BUSY SITTING.
COME ON! GET YOUR CORPUSCLES FLOWING. YOUR LUNGS OPENED UP.
YOU'LL FEEL ALIVE! LIKE A NEW PERSON!
HOW LONG DOES THIS USUALLY LAST?
36 HOURS. IT'S ALMOST OVER.
TAP TAP
4.12

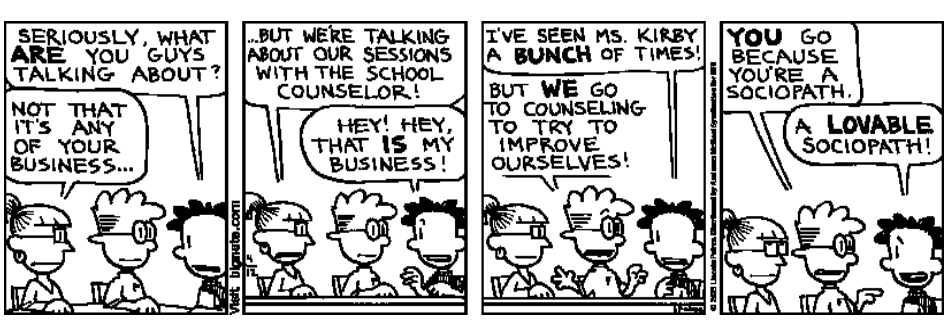
ALLEY OOP

THE OLD WOMAN WASN'T THE ONLY ONE TRYING TO KILL US, BJORN. THERE'S ALSO ... UH ... WHERE DID HE GO?
OH, I'M RIGHT HERE. I TRIED MORPHING INTO A CHAIR. I WAS RIGHT. IT STINKS.
YOU'RE REALLY UNCOM-FORTABLE.
WELL, BACK TO KILLING Y-... IS THAT...?
DEATH-ORDER, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET MY FRIENDS.
BJORN, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET MY ENEMIES.
4/12

ARLO & JANIS

THE APRIL FULL MOON IS THE PINK MOON!
THAT'S SWEET!
THIS MOON IS ALSO A MICROMOON!
WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S THE OPPOSITE OF A SUPERMOON! THE MOON IS AT ITS FARTHEST POINT OF ORBIT, SO IT APPEARS SMALLER IN THE SKY...
IT DOESN'T MATTER.

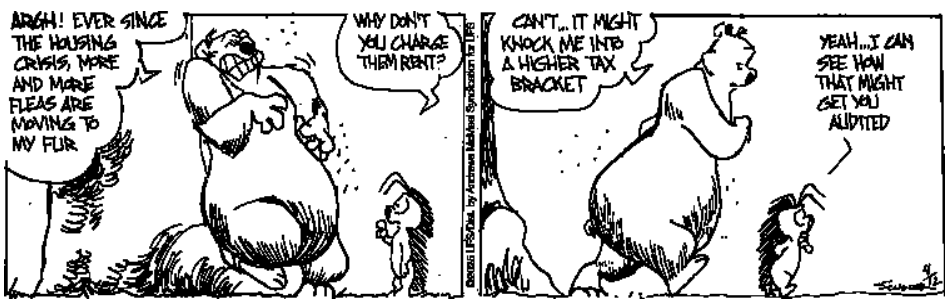
BIG NATE


SERIOUSLY, WHAT ARE YOU GUYS TALKING ABOUT?
NOT THAT IT'S ANY OF YOUR BUSINESS...
...BUT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT OUR SESSIONS WITH THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR!
HEY! HEY, THAT IS MY BUSINESS!
I'VE SEEN MS. KIRBY A BUNCH OF TIMES!
BUT WE GO TO COUNSELING TO TRY TO IMPROVE OURSELVES!
YOU GO BECAUSE YOU'RE A SOCIOPATH.
A LOVABLE SOCIOPATH!

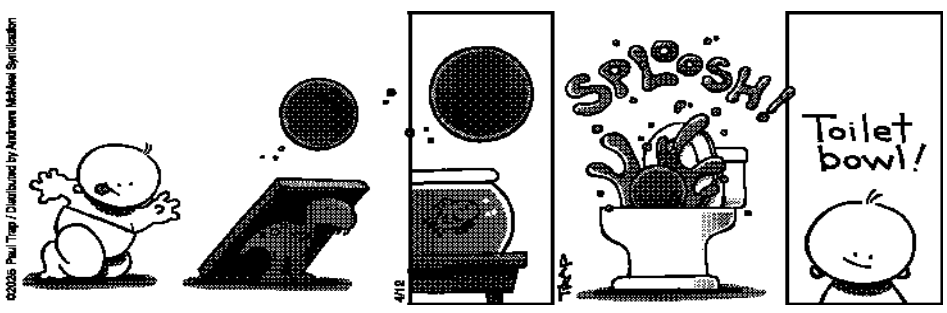
BORN LOSER

FRANK & ERNEST

GRIZZWELLS


ARGH! EVER SINCE THE HOUSING CRISIS, MORE AND MORE FLEAS ARE MOVING TO MY FUR
WHY DON'T YOU CHARGE THEM RENT?
CAN'T... IT MIGHT KNOCK ME INTO A HIGHER TAX BRACKET
YEAH... I CAN SEE HOW THAT MIGHT GET YOU ADOPTED

THATABABY



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SODOKU PUZZLE

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

DIFFICULTY RATING: 5/5

ANSWER ON PAGE 6

		2			7			
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MODERATELY CONFUSED

MOM SAID THAT THIS YEAR WE CAN ONLY AFFORD TO COLOR EASTER ROCKS.
STAHLER.
4/12
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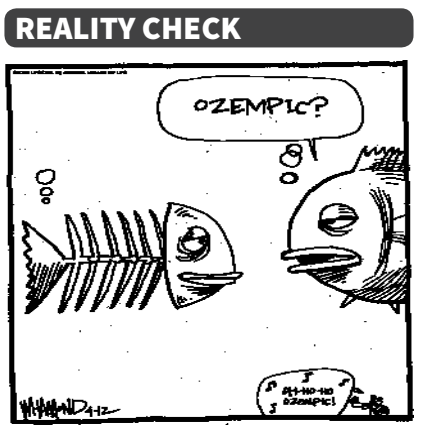
REALITY CHECK



CROSSWORD PUZZLE

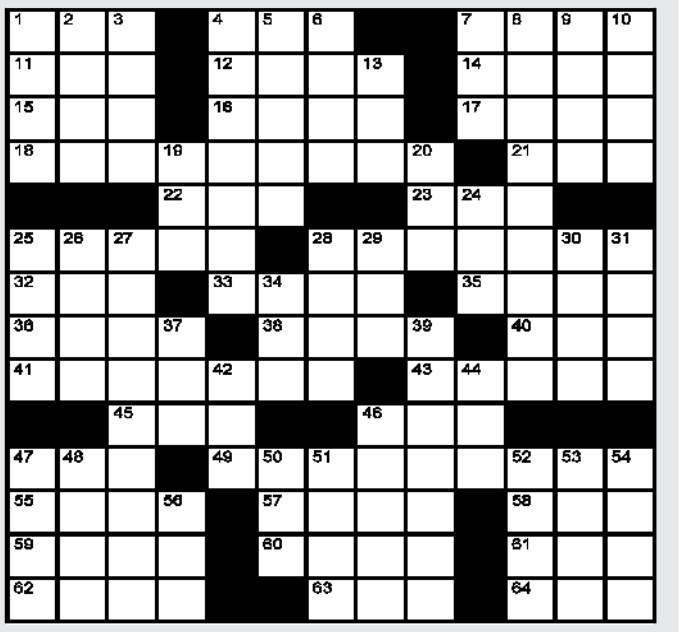
ACROSS

1 Orchestra's place
4 Mil. rank
7 Black
11 Artist Yoko —
12 Paid athletes
14 Innocent one
15 Coin used in old France
16 Colleen
17 Forehead
18 Discolored, as silver
21 "I wouldn't — on it"
22 USN rank
23 Anger
25 Not achieved
28 Funny
32 — & Perrins sauces
33 Pack
35 Sand hill
36 Zilch
38 Insect part
40 Abbr. in a timetable
41 Et cetera (3 wds.)
43 "The Thinker" sculptor
45 Set as a price
46 Tavern
47 Hgt.
49 Wrote illegibly
55 Mohair
57 Projection on a hook
58 Nest egg letters
59 Land area
60 Aspect
61 Balsam source
62 Toy on a string (Hyph.)
63 Mind-bending drug, for short
64 Dynamite letters

DOWN

1 Versifier
2 Ancient Peruvian
3 — de force
4 Broken bone supports
5 Wimbledon surface
6 "Nonsense!"
7 — tide
8 Cooked over hot coals
9 Woodwind
10 Amphibian
13 Dir. letters
19 Born (Fr.)
20 Not very bright
24 Make free of
25 Arm bone
26 Sign gas
27 Required
28 Invent
29 Possess
30 Opposing one
31 Not very fatty
34 Couple
37 Curved letter
39 Seized
42 Approves
44 Spherical body
46 "— of a Feather"
47 Broadway musical "Come From —"
48 In — parentis
50 "Ghosts" channel
51 Banister
52 Elevator, British style
53 "— Brockovich"
54 Flit
56 Name shared by 13 popes

ANSWER ON PAGE 6



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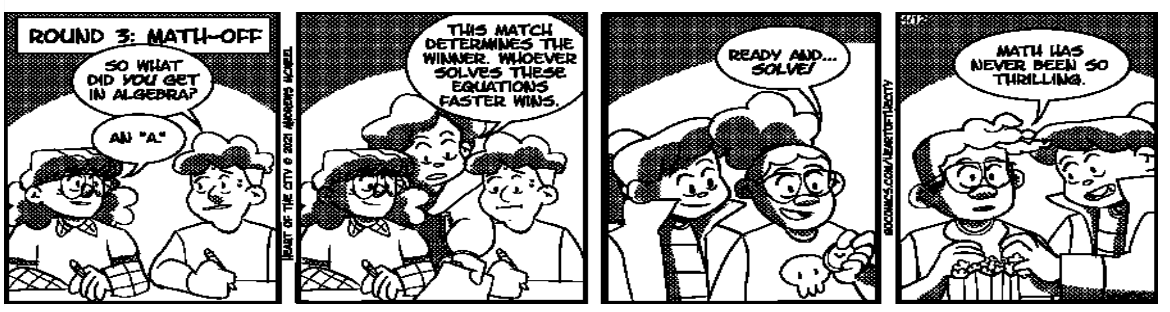
BREVITY

HEART OF THE CITY


ROUND 3: MATH-OFF
SO WHAT DID YOU GET IN ALGEBRA?
AN "A."
THIS MATCH DETERMINES THE WINNER. WHOEVER SOLVES THESE EQUATIONS FASTER WINS.
READY AND... SOLVE!
MATH HAS NEVER BEEN SO THRILLING.

DEATH NOTICES

Jeanne Marie Horner, 86, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on Wednesday, April 2, 2025. Services have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Beatrice Hunsicker, 90, passed April 3, 2025. Funeral service will be April 10, 2025 at 1:00p.m. at Brown Funeral Home, visitation beginning at noon. Arrangements by Brown Funeral Home. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com.

Russell Lynn Staples, 100, passed away on Monday, April 7, 2025 in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Allred Funeral Home.

George Edward Bond, 80, of Niles, Michigan, passed away on April 4, 2025, in Mishawaka, Indiana. Services have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

David James Hayslip, 30, passed away on Monday, April 7, 2025, in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Johannes Marais, 67, passed away April 5, 2025. Funeral at William Starr-Campground on May 3, 2025 at 1p.m. Arrangements have been entrusted to Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services, Niles. www.BrownFuneralHomeNiles.com

Elsie Lucile West, 88, passed away on Monday, April 7, 2025, in Niles, Michigan. Arrangements have been entrusted to and are pending with Brown Funeral Home & Cremation Services.

Warren R. Davis, 81, of Jones, died Wednesday, April 9, 2025. Arrangements are pending at Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis

Geraldine Mooney, 88, passed away on March 26, 2025. Services will be held on Saturday, April 19, 2025, at 10:30am at Mission Hills Chapel. Arrangements entrusted to Brown Funeral Home.

Linda Preston, 67, of Stevensville, passed away on Monday, April 07, 2025. Arrangements have been entrusted to Bowerman Funeral Home in Eau Claire. Services on Saturday April 19. www.BowermanFuneral.com

OBITUARIES

Donald E. Johnson

January 23, 1956 - April 04, 2025

Donald Eugene Johnson, 69, of Edwardsburg, died peacefully Friday, April 4, 2025 in the comfort of his family's presence.

His life began January 23, 1956 in Vandalia, Missouri, the first son after four daughters and followed by one brother, born to Herbert and Marjorie Johnson. He married Teresa October 5, 1974 in Elkhart.

Don was known to many as Papa. He graduated from Jimtown High School in Elkhart in 1974. Don retired from Carpenters Local Union #413 in 2011. He was passionate about archery, commonly hunting and fishing with his bow. Don was involved in many sports and was quite competitive. Don's family loved to hear him sing and he enjoyed various genres of music. Later on in life, Don and Teresa spent time together riding motor cycles with their friends. The only time Don could be still was when he was laying on the beach in Florida. He enjoyed watching his children and grandchildren in all their extra- curricular activities. Don was always there to lend a hand to his family and friends.

Don will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by his wife of fifty years, Teresa Johnson of Edwardsburg; two daughters, Tara (Gordon Jr.) Bruens, Bobbi (Keith) Bruens; nine grandchildren, Brittany, Travis, Shelby, Trevor, Austin, Wyatt, Axl, Sophia, Beau; six great grandchildren, Ella, Chance, Braylon, Remington, Margot, Callen; three sisters, Joyce Miller, Marsha Hunt, Sandy (Myron) Miller all of Elkhart; one brother, Allen (Ann) Johnson of Naples, Florida and a host of nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Deb Davis.

Family and friends will gather to celebrate Don's Saturday, April 19, 2025 from 4:00 p.m. until 7:00p.m. in the Wellfield Botanical Gardens located at 1011 North Main Street in Elkhart, Indiana 46514

The family prefers donations in memory of Don be made to Lewy Body Dementia Association, 912 Killian Hill Road S.W., Lilburn, Georgia (www.lbda.org/donate).

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Connelly Chapel, Cassopolis. Please share a memory or a message online: wagnercares.com.

MAXWELL HARDEN | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Karrah Herring speaks during the Niles-Buchanan NAACP meeting Tuesday, March 25.

Niles-Buchanan NAACP hosts former Indiana EIO Officer

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

NILES — The Niles-Buchanan branch of the NAACP hosted a special guest during its monthly meeting Tuesday, March 25 in the lower level of the Niles District Library, 620 E. Main St.

The meeting featured speaker Karrah Herring, who was appointed by Governor Eric Holcomb in 2020 as Indiana's first Chief Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity Officer. With 15 years of experience in higher education, corporate and state government, she is a public relations and workplace culture expert. Previously, she spent nearly a decade at the University of Notre Dame, leading workplace compliance, public affairs and strategic partnerships.

A Purdue and Valparaiso Law graduate, Herring is a sought-after speaker and global seminar leader. Her numerous accolades include Indiana Lawyer's 2024 Diversity in Law honor and IBJ Media's Indiana 250 Most Influential Business Leaders (2022-2024).

"If you want to make the biggest difference in your community, start with curiosity," Herring said. "Start to ask questions of the people that are in their local community that are doing the work and when you ask those questions and you don't always get the response that you need, follow up. Follow up with a letter, with a request to get a meeting because you have to hold people that we voted into office accountable. It's on those elected officials to listen and for us to hold them accountable.

Herring encouraged NAACP members to reach out to other organizations such as the League of Women Voters.

"In South Bend, our League of Women Voters is a fantastic group," she said. "They are really connected to a lot of non-profits and a lot of advocacy groups. Think about what other advocacy groups are in this area and have a joint move together. Talk about the challenges that you're seeing and start to bring some solutions as a community."

Members and guests were able to ask Herring questions following her speech. President Barbara Woodson encouraged members to volunteer and get involved.

Founded in 1909, the organization is an interracial endeavor striving to ensure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate race-based discrimination. The NAACP Niles chapter began in March 1942 and had been a voice for human equality by addressing local issues through advocacy and communication, as well as sought to educate members and the public on history and current concerns. The chapter was revived last year following a six-year hiatus.

For more information on the NAACP and how to join, contact (269) 357-1151 or email nilesbuchanannaacp@gmail.com.

CROSSWORD ANSWER
From Page 5

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SUDOKU ANSWER
From Page 5

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8	9	5	6	1	4	2	7	3
1	7	6	2	3	9	8	5	4
2	4	3	7	5	8	6	1	9

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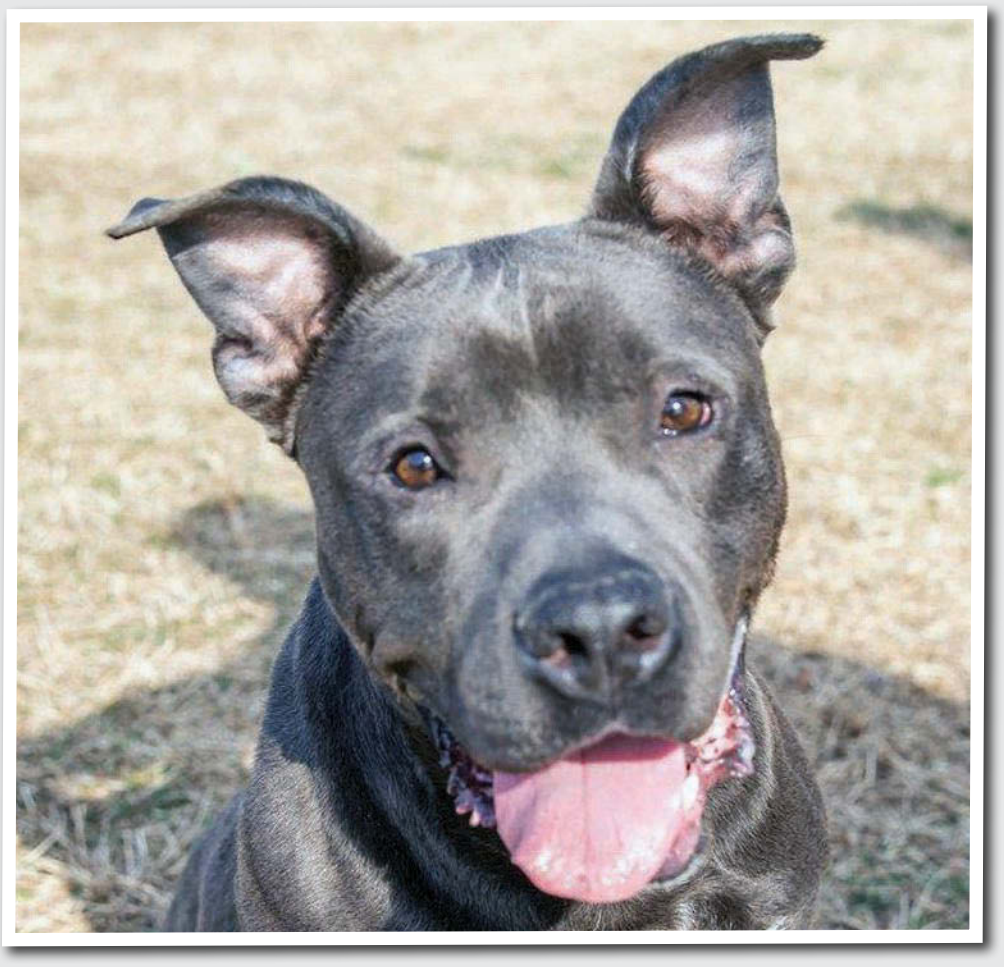
PET OF THE WEEK



Jell-O is a 3 to 5 year-old snack hound described as having a sweet nature. He enjoys attention, going for a walk and lots of treats! Jell-O is particularly fond of peanut butter-filled Kongs and loves to play with stuffed toys. Volunteers believe Jell-O will be a great companion, especially for a single person or couple so he isn't teased with treats. Bonus, he hardly barks! He is neutered and current on shots. Contact Berrien County Animal Services at (269) 927-5648.

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Sturgis Bank Forms South Berrien County Community Board

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COMMUNITY REPORT

STURGIS — Sturgis Bank has announced the formation of a Community Board of Directors for their southern Berrien County market.

Members include Brian French, Vice President, Sales and Marketing, French Paper Company; Rick McKeel, Owner, RLM Business Consulting; and Sara Senica, Owner, Law Office of Sara A. Senica. Jeff Curry, a member of the northern Berrien County Community Board of Directors for Sturgis Bank since 2020, has transferred to the new board.

"We are thrilled to have these excellent community leaders join our new board of directors," said Bob Burch, Senior Vice President and Berrien County Community President for Sturgis Bank. "We continue to build a strong team to serve our customers in the greater southwest Michigan area, and the counsel of our new board members will help us best serve the needs of our business and retail customers."

"The formation of the South Berrien County Community Board for Sturgis Bank aligns with our dedicated support to the hometowns we serve and focus on local decision-making," added Jason Hyska, CEO of Sturgis Bank. "We appreciate the business leaders who are committed to helping their communities grow by partnering with us and providing their local point of view."

Brian French is a lifelong resident of Niles and works as a marketing consultant. As the sixth generation of his family to work at French Paper Company, French traveled the country promoting and selling high-end papers to the print and packaging markets. A graduate of Niles High School and Michigan State University, he enjoys helping small businesses thrive and also volunteers for the YMCA and the Wood Foundation.

Jeff Curry has lived in southwest Michigan his entire life and has been a member of a Sturgis Bank community board since April 2021. He is the retired President of Express-1 of Buchanan and Premium Transportation Logistics of Benton Harbor. Curry has significant experience in senior leadership for financial services businesses and extensive volunteer board service for K-12 and higher education organizations.

Rick McKeel is a lifelong resident of Niles and owner of RLM Business Consulting. He was President and CEO of New Carbon Company, LLC, makers of F.S. Carbon waffle products, for more than a decade, helped grow the company into a national brand serving hotels, restaurants, schools, and individual consumers. McKeel is a graduate of Niles High School and Western Michigan University with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree. Rick has been an integral part of the Niles community, having served as Varsity Softball Coach at Niles High School for more than 10 years, an announcer for Niles High School Football and Basketball programs for more than 20 years and as a Niles Community School Board member.

Sara Senica has been a practicing attorney for twenty years, opening her own practice in 2011. She serves as general legal counsel for several municipalities in southwest Michigan. Senica graduated from the University of Illinois with a Bachelor of Arts degree and from Valparaiso University School of Law. She serves on the Board of Directors of the YMCA of Michiana, the Michigan Gateway Community Foundation, the Hunter Foundation and the Greater Niles Area Chamber of Commerce.

Burch, Hyska, Sturgis Bank President and Chief Operating Officer Matt Scheske, and Patrick Swem, Vice President, Commercial Lending are also members of the Sturgis Bank South Berrien County Community Board of Directors.

For additional information, visit www.sturgis.bank.

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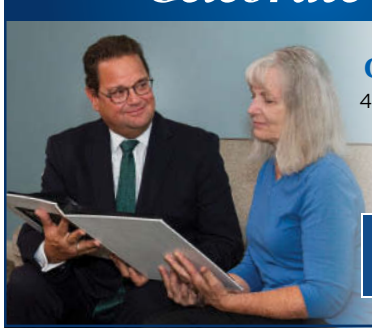
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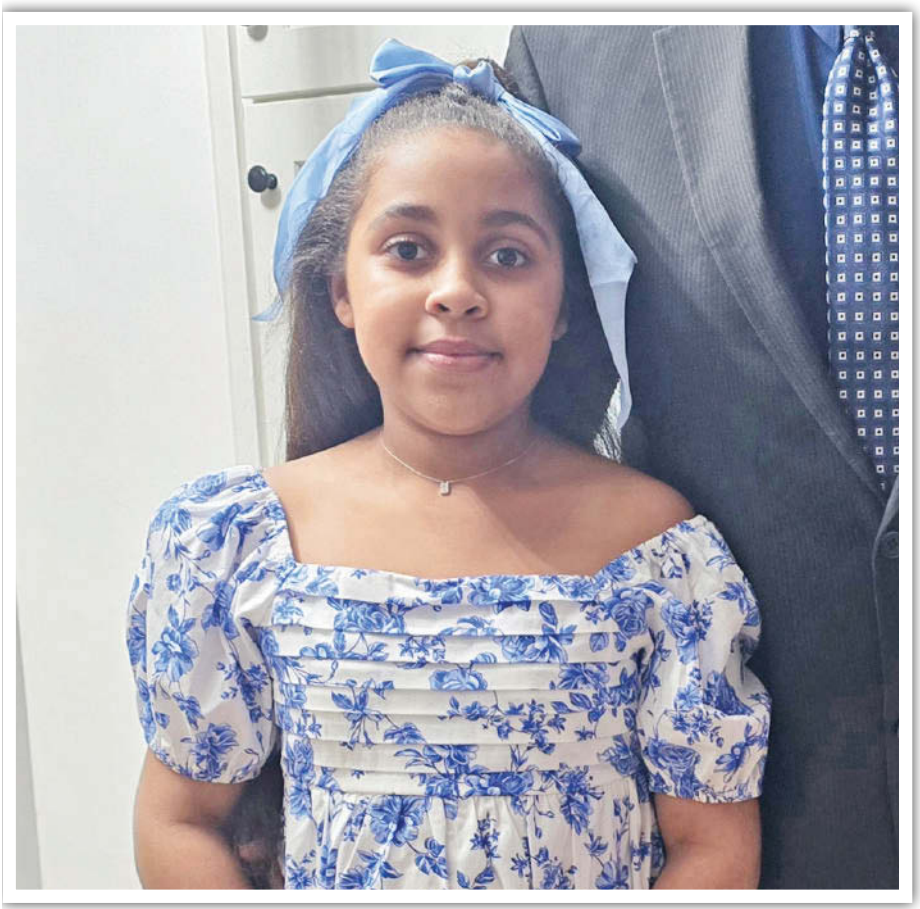
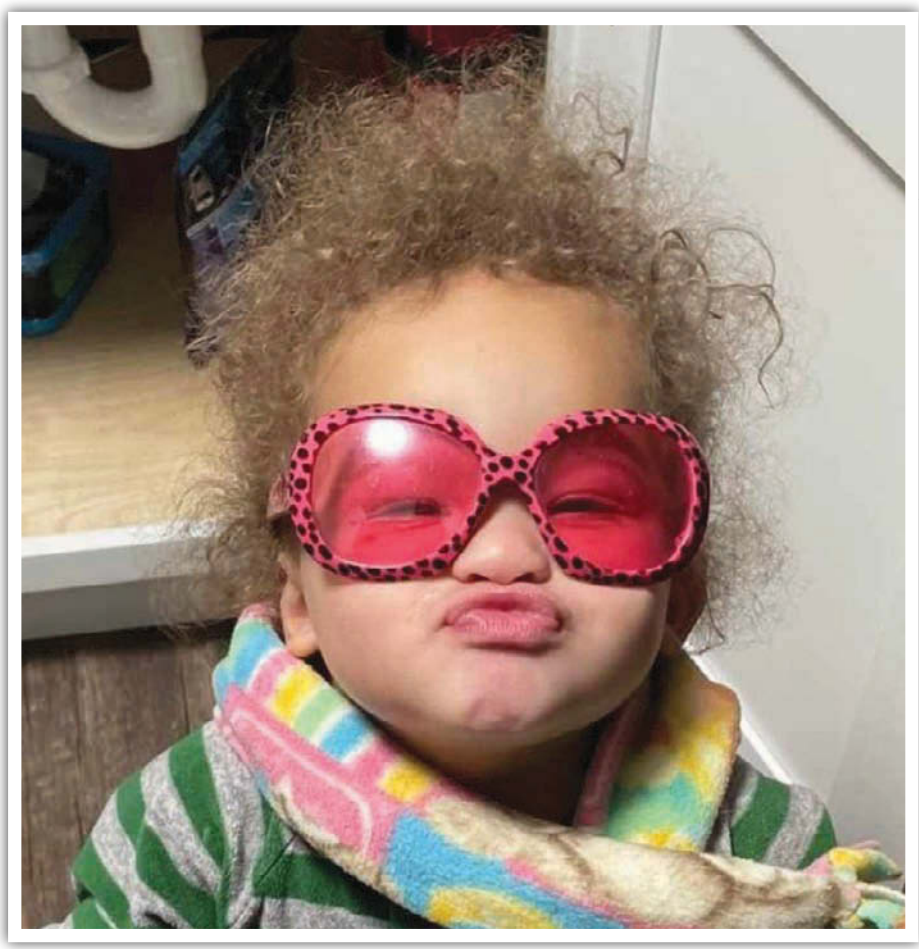
BIRTHDAY ANNOUNCEMENT: MURPHY



SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Brooklynne Murphy, of Niles, celebrated her 10th birthday this week. Brooklynne was born April 10, 2015. Her family includes her mother and father, siblings Jovani, Julian and Corinna.

BIRTHDAY ANNOUNCEMENT: MCCULLY



SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Roscelia McCully, of South Bend, celebrated her third birthday this week. Roscelia was born April 7, 2022. "We love you to the moon!" - Mama G and Papa

DREAMS

Continued from page A1

just come here and get what they need."

For Campbell and Garza, S & J Customs is a culmination of each of their custom businesses uniting as one. Campbell began selling custom shirts, signs and cups approximately eight years ago and Garza began her custom vinyl and sublimation printing and clothing business approximately six years ago. The two met at an area vendor's market and soon decided to join forces and open a storefront.

"I really wanted to open a store and she did, too," Campbell said. "We saw a 'for rent' sign here and we got picked out of a handful of people to rent here. We figured out a business plan and set everything up."

"I had to tell her that we can't put our dreams to the side, we have to make them come true," Garza added.

In addition to their items, the business is also featuring products from three local small businesses.

"We're helping them get their name out there," Campbell said.

With the new storefront, both Campbell and Garza are excited to interact with customers in-person. While the business is not open on Sundays, Campbell and Garza aim to host DIY activities once per month.

"Working here, we're able to come here and meet new people, bring crowds in and interact with other people," Garza said.

The duo is excited to contribute to downtown Niles' positive momentum.

"It's been great," Campbell said. "[The downtown businesses] have all been super welcoming and just as excited as we are to be bringing something different to downtown. Hopefully this fills a hole on this part of Main Street and we can all come together and see what we can provide for the community."

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VOTE

Continued from page A1

The amended zoning ordinance would include "Marihuana retailer," "Marihuana safety compliance facility," and "Marihuana secure transporter" as a special land use. If the zoning ordinance is approved, marijuana establishments would be located in the General Business zoning district and would have frontage on S. 11th Street between State Line Road and Fulkerson Road.

Township officials voted unanimously in May 2019 to opt out of the recreational marijuana business. In 2022, Voters turned down a proposal that would have allowed marijuana establishments in Niles Charter Township limits before approving a proposal in November 2024.

The City of Niles, Buchanan, Cassopolis, Dowagiac, Edwardsburg, Berrien County and Cass County were among the 302 municipalities statewide that received payments from the marijuana Regulation Fund in March. Each eligible municipality and county received more than $58,200 for every licensed retail store and microbusiness located within its jurisdiction.

For the 2024 state fiscal year, there was more than $331 million available for distribution from the Marihuana Regulation Fund.

The distribution breakdown for local municipalities and counties is as follows:

- Buchanan: Number of licenses – six; city distributions – $349,371.96
- Cassopolis: Licenses – two; village distributions – $116,457.32
- Dowagiac: Licenses – two; city distributions – $116,457.32
- Edwardsburg: Licenses – two; village distributions – $116,457.32
- City of Niles: Licenses – seven; city distributions – $407,600.62
- Berrien County: Licenses – 27; county distributions – $1,572,173.82
- Cass County: Licenses – 8; county distributions – 465,829.28

Durm-Hiatt expects the interest in township marijuana establishments to be high.

"We don't know until the applications come in but I would expect we will half 15 to 20 applications the first day."

Run Like a Blue Streak
2nd Annual
5K Fun Run and 1 Mile Stroll
Saturday, April 26, 2025
Rudolphi Woods Trails, Dowagiac
• TEXT 269-268-6684
• casscountydemocrats.org

YMCA

Continued from page A1

growth in young children."

The Montessori Program in Niles has provided a student-centered learning environment since 2013. As the YMCA takes on program oversight, it will maintain the program's core structure while integrating additional resources to support families and students.

"We appreciate our partnership with the YMCA of Greater Michiana and their ongoing work in early childhood education," said Dr. Adam Burtsfield, Superintendent at Niles Community Schools. "The Montessori Program has been an important part of Niles Community Schools, and this transition ensures its continuity for students and families who value this approach."

Families currently enrolled in the Niles Montessori Program will experience a seamless transition, with dedicated support from both the YMCA and Niles Community Schools to maintain consistency in curriculum and operations.

For more information about Northside Child Development Center programming, please visit https://www.ymcagm.org/preschool-northside or call YMCA of Greater Michiana's Member Services at (269) 683-1552.

ROOM

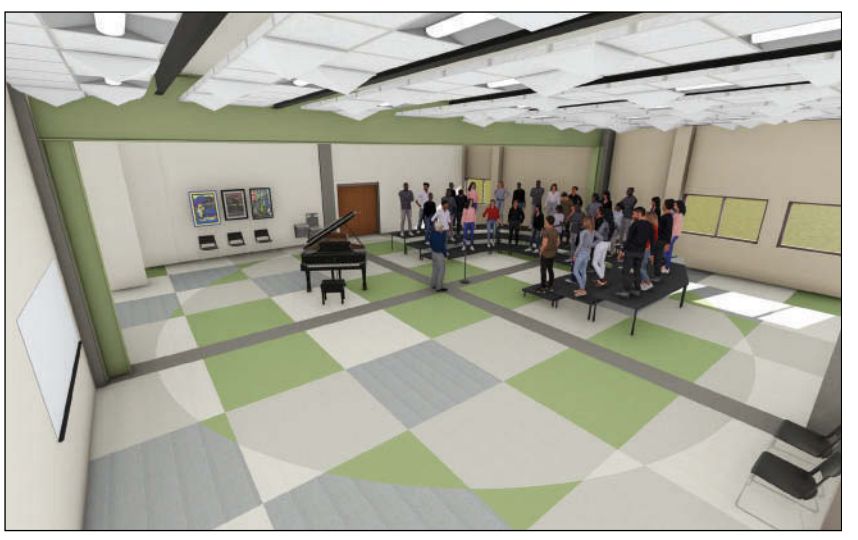
Continued from page A1

should be completed in 2028.

Construction costs are estimated to total $11million. To help fund the projects, the college, in partnership with the Southwestern Michigan College Foundation, is launching the "Room to Grow" capital campaign. Contributions of any size are welcome, and donors wishing to pledge large gifts of support will have access to naming rights opportunities in highly-visible wrestling or performing arts spaces.

"The championship success of SMC Wrestling in just three seasons is incredible, and the high-quality of the performances by our choir, band and musical theater students over many decades is unquestioned," said Dr. Joe Odenwald, SMC President. "Student learning takes place every day, all across campus - not just in the classroom - and we need to continue to provide modern facilities that measure up to the level of excellence the faculty, staff and students are already achieving. We urge community members to embrace this opportunity to build more room for them to grow."

The SMC Men's Wrestling team returned to action in 2022 after a 30-year hiatus and has won three straight MCCAA championships. This season, the Roadrunners bested three nationally-ranked teams to win the Great Lakes District championship and qualified the maximum of 10 wrestlers for the NJCAA National Championships in Council Bluffs, Iowa. SMC finished #14 in the country and had two wrestlers named as All-Americans. SMC will be the first college in Michigan, and only the 30th in the country, to offer NJCAA Women's Wrestling beginning in Fall 2025.



SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

A rendering of the redesigned Lyons Building choir room.

SMC's band and choir ensembles welcome students of all majors. Courses range from music theory to vocal performance and are available for credit or personal enrichment. From Concert Choir to Pep Band, students have a variety of opportunities to explore music, build confidence and enhance their college experience. SMC hosts music camps and clinics for local high school students to help hone their talents, and the college offers several public band and choir concerts, free of charge, throughout the year.

Those interested in donating to support wrestling and performing arts at SMC via the "Room to Grow" campaign may do so at https://givebutter.com/roomtogrow, or contact Emily Schrock, Manager of Development, at 269.782.1279 or eschrock02@swmich.edu.

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TRACK & FIELD

Niles grad signs with SMC track

COMMUNITY REPORT

NILES — Elaine Murphy, a 2024 graduate of Niles High School, has signed her NJCAA Letter of Intent to compete in track and field for Head Coach Zac Sartori and the Roadrunners.

"Elaine's work ethic is amazing. She is a leader and very caring for others," said SMC Assistant Coach Andre Love, who coached Murphy while both were at Niles. "In my time coaching her, I've seen her growth and maturity. It is an honor to still have the opportunity to coach and mentor her as she rises to the next level in academics and athletics."

"Elaine shows a lot of promise as a sprinter and I'm excited she'll be joining the Roadrunners," Sartori added. "I know that she's worked with Coach Love in the past and I'm confident she'll become an asset to the program."

Murphy is the fourth member of the 2025 SMC Women's Track and Field recruiting class, joining Izabel Hoskin of Niles, Savannah Mullins from Hartford and Dayne Cuvo of Constantine. At least six other student-athletes will compete in both women's cross country and women's track for the Roadrunners.

In April 2024, SMC's Board of Trustees unanimously approved the addition of Women's Wrestling, Men's Track & Field and Women's Track & Field as official NJCAA sports, to start competition in Fall 2025. This expansion

See SIGNS, Page B3

SOCCER

Buchanan edges Dowagiac 4-3 in girls soccer action

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

BUCHANAN — The Dowagiac girls soccer team came up just short against Buchanan Wednesday night, falling 4-3.

Trailing 3-0 at halftime, the Chieftains rallied to tie the game before giving up a goal.

Johannah McDonald earned a hat trick with three goals and Brianna Garcia and Rylie O'Konski each had one assist.

"We played another solid game today," said Dowagiac Coach Joe Pasternak. "We fell asleep for about 15 minutes in the first half and gave up three of the four goals in that time. The rest of the game, we pretty much controlled. Buchanan is good at capitalizing on your mistakes and they made us pay for it. We are still giving up the ball too much and allowing teams to have chances they shouldn't be getting.

"I like our overall play and heart to keep fighting even after being down by three but we have to stop beating ourselves and putting ourselves in those spots"

Dowagiac 4, Michigan Lutheran 2

The Chieftains beat the Titans 4-2 Monday in St. Joseph. Johannah McDonald tallied two goals and two assists and Brianna Garcia and Chloe Brewer each tallied one goal.

"We started off a little slow," Pasternak said. "We came out unfocused and flat and gave up the early goal. After that we started to come alive and play our way moving the ball and getting opportunities to score but we just couldn't finish in the first half. In the second half, we put it all together and finally got the lid off and started to score. I'm proud of the way the girls handled the struggles of the first half and were able to keep pushing and not shut down because things weren't going right."

Dowagiac hosts Niles at 9:30 a.m. Saturday to kick off

See ACTION, Page B3

WRESTLING

Dowagiac's Chapman signs with SMC

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

DOWAGIAC — Southwestern Michigan College's wrestling team added some more homegrown talent.

Dowagiac's Cal Chapman is staying local and has signed his NJCAA Letter of Intent to wrestle for

See CHAPMAN, Page B3

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

BASKETBALL

ALL-STATE

Brandywine's Adeline Gill makes D3 AP team

By MAXWELL HARDEN
max.harden@leaderpub.com

"Adeline Gill, a senior at Brandywine High School, received all-state honors from the Associated Press this week. Gill, who helped lead the Bobcats to a 22-0 regular-season record, a district and regional championship, and a spot in the Division 3 state semifinals, was a second-team selection by the AP."

NILES CHARTER TOWNSHIP — Adeline Gill, a senior at Brandywine High School, received all-state honors from the Associated Press this week.

Gill, who helped lead the Bobcats to a 22-0 regular-season record, a district and regional championship, and a spot in the Division 3 state semifinals, was a second-team selection by the AP.

Gill averaged 12 points per game for the Bobcats, who won the Lakeland Athletic Conference title outright.

Division 3

Player of the Year – Olivia Flynn, Harbor Springs

Coach of the Year – Scott Stine, Ypsilanti Arbor Prep

All-State

Olivia Flynn, Harbor Springs; Jordyn Bonnema, Kalamazoo Christian; Shelby Ignash, Cass City; Halen McLaughlin, Sanford Meridian; Eliza Bush, Ypsilanti Arbor Prep; Kyrah Gray, Evart; Averie Zinn, Genesee; Danielle Smoots-Green, Flint (Elite) New Standard Academy; Lucy Young, Kalamazoo Hackett; Jenessa Eagle, Ishpeming; Talia Laskowski, Saugatuck; Aubree Calloway, Bronson; Elly Bengel, Pewamo-Westphalia; Kenna Hunt, Jackson Lumen Christi; Angela Meggisson, Ypsilanti Arbor Prep; Coach – Scott Stine, Ypsilanti Arbor Prep

Second team

Aubrey Hiller, Manton; Addi Hovey, Hart; Kyrieona Carter, Detroit Pershing; Addie Troska, Rochester Hills Lutheran Northwest; Adeline Gill, Brandywine; Reese Gohsman, Millington; Myah Hubble, Beaverton; June Kirkpatrick, East Jordan; Tess Tillman, Royal Oak Shrine; Grace Guibord, Sandusky; Jackie Kiilunen, Calumet; HarLee Leasher, Brown City; Mallory Miller, Mason County Central; Caroline Reinke, Sandusky; Coach – Reggie Ignash, Cass City; Coach – Ellynne Volerming, Harbor Beach

Honorable mention

Aubree Bouck, Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port Laker; Jayna Burmeister, Shelby; Haleigh Guitar, Harbor Beach; Jaidyn Klimp, Galesburg-Augusta; Kate Starkey, Grass Lake; Alexis Trine, Jonesville; Elli VanDusen, Kalamazoo Christian; Katelyn Wendling, New Lothrop; Brooke Mossburg, Monroe SMCC; Lily Smieska, Leslie; Ellyanna Carman, Ovid-Elsie

PHOTO COURTESY OF TANYA HAGEN

BASEBALL

Silver Sluggers Senior Discount Program Grows for 2025

COMMUNITY REPORT

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The South Bend Cubs Silver Sluggers program has returned again this year. Presented by Sterling Healthcare, fans 60 years old and above can purchase tickets at 50 percent off to every Wednesday home game in 2025.

The program includes a special punch card with all 10 Wednesday games on it.

With each game attended, members will get their card stamped. Those who attend at least four games will receive a special South Bend Cubs hat. Fans who attend at least seven games will be invited to a special Silver Sluggers Club picnic that will be held on the final Wednesday game of the year.

To receive a Silver Sluggers membership card, fans must visit the Four Winds Field Box Office and present a photo ID. Members must visit the Four Winds Field Box Office to receive their discounted game ticket.

Silver Slugger game dates are listed below with their start time (in Eastern Time).

April 9 - 7:05 p.m.
April 23 - 7:05 p.m.
May 7 - 11:05 a.m.
May 21 - 11:05 a.m.
June 4 - 7:05 p.m. (post-game fireworks)

FOOTBALL

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

Niles High School is moving up from Class B to Class A.

MHSAA 2025-26 School Year Classifications Announced

COURTESY OF MHSAA

LANSING — Classifications for Michigan High School Athletic Association elections and postseason tournaments for the 2025-26 school year have been announced, with enrollment breaks for postseason tournaments posted to each sport's page on the MHSAA Website.

Classifications for the upcoming school year are based on a second semester count date, which for MHSAA purposes was Feb. 12. The enrollment figure submitted for athletic classification purposes may be different from the count submitted for school aid purposes, as it does not include students ineligible for athletic competition because they reached their 19th birthday prior to Sept. 1 of the current school year and will not include alternative education students if none are allowed athletic eligibility by the local school district.

All sports' tournaments are conducted with schools assigned to equal or nearly equal divisions, with lines dependent on how many schools participate in those respective sports.

For 2025-26, there are 754 tournament-qualified member schools. Schools recently were notified of their classification, and sport-by-sport divisions were posted to the MHSAA Website today. MHSAA Executive Director Mark Uyl said a school may not subsequently lower its enrollment figure. However, if a revised enrollment figure is higher and indicates that a school should be playing in a higher division, that school would be moved up.

Three MHSAA Finals champions crowned during the first two seasons of this 2024-25 school year are set to move to new divisions for 2025-26. The Orchard Lake St. Mary's (11-player Division 2) and Deckerville (8-player Division 1) football teams won titles in November but will move into 11-player Division 3 and 8-player Division 2, respectively, this upcoming season. Holland Christian's boys tennis team – champion in Lower Peninsula Division 4 this past fall – will move into Lower Peninsula Division 3.

Schools also may request to play in a higher classification or division in a sport for a minimum of two years. Requests to opt up in fall sports for 2025-26 must be submitted by May 1, winter sports by Aug. 14 and spring sports by Oct. 15

Visit the respective sport pages on the MHSAA Website to review the divisional alignments for all MHSAA-sponsored tournament sports. Click the "SPORTS" menu at the top of this page to access the page for each sport, then the "Assignments" link on the selected sport page and then "DIVISION LIST" to see the 2025-26 division. Boys volleyball, which will begin play with MHSAA sponsorship in 2025-26, will be classified in September, providing more time to identify the number of schools that will have varsity teams in that sport for its inaugural season.

Traditional classes (A, B, C, D) – formerly used to establish tournament classifications – are used only for MHSAA elections. To determine traditional classifications, after all counts are submitted, tournament-qualified member schools are ranked according to enrollment and then split as closely into quarters as possible. For 2025-26, there are 188 member schools each in Class A and Class B, and 189 member schools each in Class C and Class D.

Effective with the 2025-26 school year, schools with 788 or more students are in Class A. The enrollment limits for Class B are 370-787, Class C is 171-369, and schools with enrollments of 170 and fewer are Class D. The break between Classes A and B decreased five students from 2024-25, the break between Classes B and C decreased eight students, and the break between Classes C and D is two students higher than for the 2024-25 school year.

The new classification breaks will see 22 schools move up in Class for 2025-26 while 22 schools will move down:

Moving Up from Class B to Class A

Adrian, Bloomfield Hills Marian, Fruitport, Hastings, Marysville, Niles, Owosso

Moving Down from Class A to Class B

Battle Creek Harper Creek, Detroit East English, Linden, Sault Ste. Marie, Sparta, St. Johns, Wayland

Moving Up from Class C to Class B

Clawson, Detroit Central, Hartford, Kent City, Napoleon, Taylor Prep, Warren Michigan Collegiate

Moving Down from Class B to Class C

Clinton Township Clintondale, Constantine, Erie Mason, Fennville, Ishpeming Westwood, Ovid-Elsie, Quincy

Moving Up from Class D to Class C

Benton Harbor Countryside Academy, Detroit Crockett Midtown Science & Medicine, Kalamazoo Phoenix, Fulton, New Buffalo, New Haven Merritt Academy, Traverse City Greenspire, Ubly

Moving Down from Class C to Class D

Ann Arbor Central Academy, Eau Claire, Fowler, Ishpeming, Marine City Cardinal Mooney, Southfield Manoogian, Three Oaks River Valley, Whittemore-Prescott

New Postseason-Eligible Tournament Schools in 2025-26

Ann Arbor Michigan Islamic Academy, Athens Factoryville Christian, Flint Cultural Center

Enrollment Breaks by Classes – 2025-26

(Number of schools in parentheses)

Class A: 788 and above (188 schools)
Class B: 370 – 787 (188)
Class C: 171 – 369 (189)
Class D: 170 and below (189)

CROSS COUNTRY

Wisdom joins SMC Cross Country

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — Gabby Wisdom of Watervliet High School has signed her NJCAA Letter of Intent to run cross country for Coach Zac Sartori and the Roadrunners. Wisdom will also compete in track and field for SMC.

"I'm so excited for Gabby to be joining our team," Sartori said. "I've been watching her over the past couple of years and she's got such potential and a really infectious spirit. She's going to make some huge strides over the next two years and I'm excited to watch her grow as a runner."

"Gabby always gives 100 percent of herself whether it be in practice or in meets," added Watervliet Coach Aaron Weber. "She works hard year-round constantly looking to improve. She is fun to be around and a very supportive teammate."

Wisdom is the fifth member of SMC's 2025 Women's Cross Country recruiting class, joining Zoie Wood of Gobles, Trinity Mortimore of Decatur, Emily King of Martin and Lillian Wolf of Hartford.

> "Gabby always gives 100 percent of herself whether it be in practice or in meets. She works hard year-round constantly looking to improve. She is fun to be around and a very supportive teammate."
>
> — **Coach Aaron Weber**

SIGNS

Continued from page B1

will bring the number of NJCAA teams at SMC to nine, plus multiple club and E-sports opportunities.

Student-athletes interested in competing in men's or women's track and field or any other sport as a Roadrunner should complete the Recruiting Form at https://smcroadrunners.com/landing/index

ACTION

Continued from page B1

the Dowagiac Invitational.

Edwardsburg 2, South Haven 0

The Eddies picked up their first win of the season Wednesday night with a 2-0 victory over South Haven.

Alexandria Ferguson and Sophia Kuntz scored for the Eddies (1-3), who will face Buchanan at 5 p.m. Tuesday in Buchanan.

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS

CHAPMAN

Continued from page B1

Coach Todd Hesson and the Roadrunners.

A two-time team captain, Chapman has had an impressive high school wrestling career, winning 104 matches, helping the team win two Lakeland Conference Championships, four District Championships and making four team regional finals.

Individually, Chapman was the 2022 16U Greco state champion and has placed fifth overall in the individual state tournament as both a junior and senior. As a senior Chapman earned a regional championship and was named 1st team All-Southwest, Academic All-Southwest and MHSAA Academic All State.

Chapman is joining a SMC program that has won three straight MCCAA championships and achieved a perfect MCCAA duals record over three years, three trips to the NJCAA Nationals and the 2025 Great Lakes District Championship.

Berrien County recognizes victim observances

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

ST. JOSEPH — The Berrien County Prosecutor's Office is recognizing three victim service related observances this month and Prosecutor Amy Byrd brought information about them to the Berrien County Board of Commissioners Thursday.

Byrd recognized that this is National Crime Victims Rights Week and that April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month as well as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. She said the goal in recognizing victims' rights as well as child abuse and sexual assault prevention is to let people know about the problem and the services available.

With the National Crime Victims Rights Week, she acknowledged the work of the victim advocacy staff in her office led by Victim Coordinator Carolyn Groen. "They provide services to victims every day and walk them through the process," Byrd said. "They work to be a shoulder for victims, an ear to hear their stories and someone to decode confusing legalese."

She spoke primarily about child abuse prevention efforts. "We want to dispel the myths and break the silence," she said. "One of the myths we hear going into court is that it doesn't happen that often. Actually one in four girls and one in six boys will experience sexual abuse before age 18."

"Another myth is that it's done by strangers when in reality the majority of the time it is done by someone related to the child or in their circle of trust or a friend of the family," she added. "It's also a myth that the victim will never recover, but we know that talking about it and getting treatment will help them recover long term."

Byrd said a big problem is that children blame themselves for what happened and don't tell anyone. She estimated that number to be as high as 30 percent or more. "We talk about it because breaking the silence leads to prevention," she said.

People can participate in recognizing the month by wearing blue, displaying blue pinwheels and educating themselves about the signs of child abuse. A program has been scheduled for April 24 from 2:30-5 p.m. at the Inn at Harbor Shores with former federal prosecutor Kevin Mulcahy the guest speaker.

Byrd and county commissioners lauded the work of the Children's Advocacy Center of Southwest Michigan and Caring Connection. They said the advocacy center interview children and also support the children and their families with a variety of services.

Byrd said that the advocacy center sees 500 children each year and her office handles dozens of cases each month. She said the prosecutor's office is handling 23 cases involving child victims this month.

Thursday's meeting also featured a report from Animal Services Director Ashley Herr about Animal Care and Control Appreciation Week which is April 13-19. She outlined the work her department does, from sheltering animals and reuniting people with their pets to providing vaccines, microchipping and spay/neuter services.

Herr said a "Bids for Barks" fundraiser and auction is set for April 26, a spay/neuter event on April 14 and 28 and an adoption special for cats and dogs April 13-19.

Cornerstone Alliance Launches Plan to Boost Berrien County Growth

COMMUNITY REPORT

BENTON HARBOR — Cornerstone Alliance has officially launched its 2025 Strategic Action Plan, a focused and action-oriented blueprint designed to expand economic opportunity, strengthen communities, and enhance development throughout Berrien County.

Approved by the Board of Directors on March 18, this plan reflects the vision of newly appointed President & CEO Marla Schneider and marks a significant step toward a more coordinated and impactful approach to regional development.

"Cornerstone Alliance has been a trusted part of this community for decades, and this plan reflects our enduring commitment to its growth," said John Janick, Chairman of the Board of Directors. "With a talented and experienced team in place, we're more energized than ever to get to work and deliver real results for Berrien County."

The plan is centered around four strategic priorities: Economic Development, Community Development, Sites & Assets Development, and Housing Resource Development. Each area is supported by newly defined departments and dedicated leadership, reinforcing Cornerstone Alliance's commitment to elevating its core services and improving internal capacity.

Economic Development efforts will focus on supporting Berrien County's businesses through retention, expansion, and attraction initiatives. By engaging directly with primary employers, hosting industry programs, and aligning recruitment efforts with local site readiness, Cornerstone Alliance aims to drive job growth and capital investment throughout the county.

In Community Development, the organization will expand its work with municipalities to support downtown revitalization, waterfront redevelopment, and placemaking projects. The plan emphasizes helping local communities become development-ready and better equipped to leverage funding and incentive tools.

The Sites & Assets Development strategy will ensure that industrial, commercial, and residential properties across Berrien County are positioned for future growth. Through strategic site assessments and partnerships with key state and federal agencies, Cornerstone Alliance will help accelerate project development and infrastructure improvements.

Recognizing the growing need for housing solutions, the plan introduces a new Housing Resource Development initiative. This includes commissioning a county-wide housing study, supporting zoning reform, and creating a resource within Cornerstone Alliance to guide municipalities and developers through housing-related opportunities.

"This plan sets the stage for how we show up—for our communities, our partners, and our future," said CEO Marla Schneider. "We've realigned our internal structure to match the scale of our mission, and we're doing it with clarity, collaboration, and a strong sense of purpose."

Cornerstone Alliance will implement this one-year plan, track its progress through measurable outcomes, and engage community stakeholders along the way. Following this year of execution and reflection, the organization will work with its partners to develop a longer-term strategy that continues building a stronger Berrien County.

For more information about the 2025 Strategic Action Plan, visit cstonealliance.org.

Dowagiac man gets prison time for criminal sexual conduct

By DEBRA HAIGHT
Leader Publications Contributor

CASSOPOLIS — A Dowagiac man is going to prison after being sentenced for sexually molesting an underage girl over several months in 2023.

James Joseph Tovey, 26, of Dowagiac, pleaded no contest to second-degree criminal sexual conduct during the commission of a felony and was sentenced to seven to 15 years in prison. He has credit for 219 days served and must pay $1,048 in fines and costs. He must register as a sex offender.

Tovey

He also had his probation revoked for violating his probation from a 2022 fourth-degree fleeing and eluding conviction. He was given credit for 244 days already served in that case.

The criminal sexual conduct incident occurred over several months in 2023 and involved having a sexual relationship with a 13 year old girl at locations in Cass County. The girl was rescued by the Southwest Michigan Drug Enforcement Team at a Benton Harbor area hotel.

Cass County Prosecutor Victor Fitz called Tovey's actions an "abomination" and said Tovey was on the "road to perdition" if he doesn't change. He said that while Tovey was using drugs at the time of the incidents, that was no excuse for his actions.

"She was in an absolute cesspool with the actions done by the defendant and others," Fitz said.

Defense attorney Greg Feldman said it was tragic that Tovey and the victim got into this situation and noted that his client suffers from mental deficits. "He now understands the gravity of the situation that developed," Feldman said. "He will try to learn from this and not fall victim to this again. He tends to be trusting and is taken advantage of."

Tovey said he knows what he did was wrong and wants to make things right. "I know I hurt a lot of people," he said.

"The indications are that this was a nine month ordeal of sexual and mental abuse for her at your hands," Cass County Circuit Court Judge Mark Herman said. "You would give her drugs and alcohol. She has experienced night terrors, anxiety and lots of anger. She's fearful of you returning and wreaking havoc on her life."

"You say you're sorry that you hurt people but you've had the opportunity to address your issues over and over," the judge added. "This case involved a 13 year old girl. You said you thought she was 19 but it doesn't matter what age you think she was. Your actions were callous at best … She's facing trauma for the rest of her life."

An employee of a Dowagiac organization that provides guardianship related services was sentenced to probation, jail and over $36,000 in restitution for stealing from the organization's clients.

Angela Renee Runyon, 44, of Dowagiac, pleaded guilty to three counts of embezzlement from a vulnerable adult $1,000 to $20,000 and was sentenced to three years probation, 60 days in jail with credit for one day served, $3,324 in fines and costs and $36,755.74 in restitution.

Runyon

Runyon was arrested May 16, 2024 in Dowagiac. She was a case manager for the agency and had control over clients' money.

The owner of the agency, Guardianships & Alternatives, Inc., spoke before the sentencing. She said that Runyon's actions have endangered her business and the people they care for.

"You have never shown any remorse," she told Runyon. "You didn't think about how I could lose my business, you didn't think about how it would impact me and my employees. We protect vulnerable people from people like you. You have jeopardized my business and robbed me of my retirement."

The woman noted that it wasn't just a one time incident but numerous occasions where Runyon stole from the people she was assisting for gambling, entertainment and cruises. "I treated you like a friend and you treated us as disposable," she said. "This has left us betrayed, hurt and deeply disappointed … I urge you to take accountability for what you've done."

"There's an old saying that love of money is the root of all evil," Fitz said. "You love yourself and your money more than other people. You are self-absorbed, you didn't need to do these things."

Fitz likened Runyon's actions to the story of the scorpion that rides on top of a turtle to cross a lake and then stings the turtle when it gets to the other side. "The scorpion said it was just his nature, is this your nature?" he asked Runyon. "What you did was absolutely selfish, these were things you didn't need to do, you wanted to do them."

Feldman said that like other clients he's had, Runyon's crimes started with one small transaction that snowballed. He added that if Runyon hasn't shown remorse before it's because he advises clients to not apologize during the pendency of their cases.

He noted that Runyon has a long slow road ahead of her in paying back what she took, but said "the only way to start is to start with step one."

"I'm very sorry to everyone this has affected," Runyon said. "I would like to try to make amends and pay back the money. I'm very sorry, I know I hurt a lot of people."

"You made over 150 separate transactions involving over $36,000," Judge Herman said. "Most of the people you stole from have a marginal existence at best … Everyone you stole from is someone's father, mother, brother or sister. They deserve to be treated with respect … Either you learn your lesson now or you will go to prison."

SUBMITTED | LEADER PUBLICATIONS
Trustee Becky Moore presented Director of Institutional Research Dr. Angie Evans of Edwardsburg with her 25-year service pin.

'The future is focused on the students'

President Odenwald bids farewell at final meeting

COMMUNITY REPORT

DOWAGIAC — At his final meeting as president April 9, Dr. Joe Odenwald left the Southwestern Michigan College Board of Trustees with some advice.

"The future is focused on the students and the culture they bring," he said. "Leadership has a three-year plan to position the college for continued student enrollment growth. The Room to Grow campaign, launching today, means it will be hardhat-wearing season through 2028."

Twin construction projects will expand the Charles O. Zollar Building to add a wrestling room and upgrade the Dale A. Lyons Building vocal and instrumental music facilities and to relocate the admissions office from the David C. Briegel Building.

"We owe much to Tony Leininger and the Carmi Design team" of Niles, "for designing a plan to make these investments within our economic abilities," Odenwald said. "The future Dowagiac campus has four strong anchors — our academic quad, fully updated in the past decade and a half; our expanded residential quad, which will soon include 426 spaces for on-campus living; the Student Activity Center, which in 10 months will be 11,000+ square feet larger and serving additional student athletes; and the Lyons Building, with a new choir room, an expanded band room, refreshed common areas and a new admissions suite over the next three years."

SMC "has adapted time and again, as I spoke to in my first speech as president," Odenwald said. "Students vote with their feet and they go where they can be themselves. These investments will insure our sustainability as a quality choice for students."

"My advice is to keep listening to students," he added, "not pundits or politicians. Higher education isn't going anywhere. Graduates still make better wages. And if we give students room to grow, they'll also become good people. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you for the past 7 ½ years, the past five as your president."

Odenwald also reported 285 incoming students have already signed up for new-student orientation, which begins May 1.

Trustee Becky Moore presented Director of Institutional Research Dr. Angie Evans of Edwardsburg with her 25-year service pin.

Evans, an SMC alumna, also graduated from Western Michigan University and holds a Ph.D. in sociology.

Recently-appointed Interim President Brent Brewer said Evans has served in numerous capacities since April 2000, including advisor/recruiter, transfer advisor and director of library services.

A music major at SMC, Evans continues to perform in a local band, learning to play bass guitar.

She has two boys. Her younger son makes her an Edwardsburg marching band mom. Her older son studies aerospace engineering at the University of Michigan.

The board accepted one $1,000 donation to the college and acknowledged 12 contributions to the SMC Foundation totaling $113,695.

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Miscellaneous For Sale

For sale, a refurbished mid-2019 Apple Macbook Pro with .4 GHz Intel Core i5 (13.3 inch, 8GB RAM, 256GB SSD) Space Gray (Renewed)
Brand Apple
Model Name MV962LL/A
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Asking $500. It is still in the box.

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Public Notices

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

Attention: Food Service Management Companies

Niles Community Schools is requesting proposals for school food service management services. The Food Service Management Company will provide management services according to United States Department of Agriculture regulations and guidelines, as well as State of Michigan Department of Education policies and guidelines.
The Request for Proposal and supporting documents will be available by April 28, 2025. The **mandatory** pre-bid meeting is scheduled for 2:00 pm on May 2, 2025, at One Tyler Street, Niles, MI 49120. All proposals must be submitted **electronically** to thomas.skarbek@nilesschools.org no later than 2:00 pm on May 23, 2025.
Contact thomas.skarbek@nilesschools.org to request the bid documents and confirm your attendance at the mandatory pre-bid meeting.
The Niles Community Schools' Board of Education reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all proposals or to accept the proposal that it finds, in its sole discretion, to be in the best interest of the school district.

Niles Daily Star:
Mar. 12, 2025
BIDS

PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE to CREDITORS
The Gary T. Harmon Revocable Living Trust
3331 Yankee St, Niles, MI 49120
Date of Death – 6/22/2024
Brian Koehler, Successor Trustee
21932 Arbor Ln, Novi, MI 48375
Any creditor's claims will be barred unless it is presented to the current trustee within four months of this publication.

Niles Daily Star:
Apr. 12 and 19, 2025
EST/HARMON, G.

Public Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE

Economy Storage, 2206 Yankee Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday April 26, 2025 at 10:00 a.m.

Unit #	Name
10	Charmin Kelly
27	Ron Webb
56	Nathan Thomas
116	Melissa Kaeding
119	Kyle Tracey
145/467/468	Michael Merritt
148	Gloster Johnson
183	Cindy Fisher
184/66	Mary Anderson
205	Nancy Bombrys
240	Teyshawn Wallace
278	Chelsie Carlyle
284	Kathleen Peterson
304	Dave Foster
331	Valerie Outlaw
342	Terrence Moss
346	DaMonica Williams
368	Erin Weed
379	Bobbie Helms
386	Shannon Lego
389	Parnell Jenkins
418	Melissa Hocker
427/428	McCade Reese
438	Adrianna Affriso
451	Jean Fitch
459	Jethrow Kyles
486	Leigh Anne Norris
495/498	Dave Foster
528	Ron Haynes
530	Justin Landis
541	Nicole Hurt
557	Michelle Richter
576	Joseph Auing
577	Stephanie Pellow
605	Michael Lewark
608	Robert Conner
628/499	Altavious Stone
661/665	Rodney Prescott
677/567	Julie Potate

Niles U-Stor-It, 1314 E. Main Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday April 26, 2025 at 10:30 a.m.

3	Bruce Walls
25	John Harrington
35	Tyler Cameron
49	Miranda Wendzel
54	Cynthia Swisher
57	Nathan Haynes

J & J Storage, 2220 S. 13th Street and 2627 S. 11th Street, Niles, MI 49120. Auction Saturday April 26, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.

36	Dean Dill
97	Blake King
126A	John Daniels
146A	David Pointer
170A	Mellisa Visel
189A	Erica Cutter
102	Erin Linley
133	Nick Loper
178	Alvin Pettie
227	Jennifer Nichols
238/466	James Diss
250	Robert Clayton/Jessica Vissik
263	Tamara Holmes
292	The Woodshed Crafts
325/336	William Cole Jr.
355	Carson Bowlin
373	Rhonda Sue Outlaw
426	James Schilling Jr.
449	Roberta Hibbard
452	Aaron Smith
454	Mary Ann Sipe

Niles Daily Star:
Apr. 12 and 19, 2025
STORAGE AUCTION

Legal Notices

LEGAL NOTICE

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

RE: THE JOHN P. JOHNSON & MARY ANN JOHNSON REVOCABLE (NOW IRREVOCABLE) TRUST DATED FEBRUARY 23, 2004 SURVIVING SETTLOR: JOHN P. JOHNSON
DATE OF DEATH: NOVEMBER 2, 2024..DATE OF BIRTH: MAY 25, 1934 EIN# 33-6959844
SUCCESSOR TRUSTEE: JAMES J. MOLLISON
NOTICE TO CREDITORS: The surviving Settlor of the above trust, JOHN P. JOHNSON, died November 2, 2024; he resided at 1525 S. Red Bud Trail, Buchanan, MI 49107, Bertrand Township, Berrien County, Michigan. His late wife, MARY ANN JOHNSON, died more than 3 years ago. Creditors of JOHN P. JOHNSON, Deceased and the above trust are notified that all claims against JOHN P. JOHNSON, individually and the above trust will be forever barred unless presented to James J. Mollison, Successor Trustee of the Trust, or to Attorney R. McKinley Elliott (P34337) whose respective addresses are listed below, within 4 months after the date of publication of this notice. No probate estate is necessary.
Date: 12 day of April, 2025

R. McKinley Elliott (P34337)
Attorney for Trustee
4 South Lincoln Avenue
Niles, MI 49120
C-269-470-9212

James J. Mollison, P17884, 4 South Lincoln Avenue, Niles, MI 49120, C-269-930-4170, 269-684-7600

Niles Daily Star:
Apr. 12, 2025
EST/JOHNSON, J.

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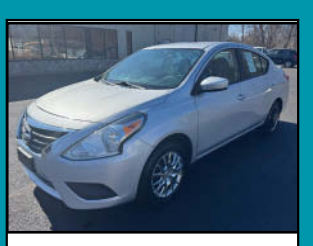

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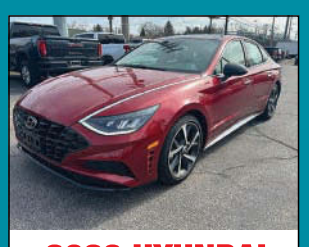

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Cannabis

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THE COST OF UNCHECKED CANNABIS EXPANSION

By KATIE LYNCH LINDGREN
Green Stem Provisioning

This will only work and be relevant until the board of trustees and the planning commission come to a final decision on the municipal rules and regulations. Once they do that, the article becomes irrelevant.

A Cautionary Tale for Niles Township: The Cost of Unchecked Cannabis Expansion

Cannabis has proven to be a transformative industry for communities across Michigan. It creates jobs, drives local tax revenue, and fosters culture and innovation. However, as Niles Township prepares to opt into the state cannabis program with unlimited licenses, there's a pressing need to learn from the experiences of neighboring communities. Without checks and balances, this policy could jeopardize the very fabric of our community, replacing it with the chaos of unregulated growth.

See EXPANSION, Page C2

Katie Lynch Lindgren - Redemption Cannabis
George Lynch - Green Stem Provisions
Ryan Basore - Redemption Cannabis
Robin Schneider - MICIA

Twisted Bee

A Heartfelt Commitment to Community and Cannabis in Dowagiac, Michigan

Nestled in the heart of Dowagiac, Michigan, Twisted Bee stands as a beacon of local pride and education within the ever-evolving cannabis industry. As a family-owned dispensary, Twisted Bee is more than just a business — it's a vital part of the Dowagiac community and the surrounding areas of Cass County and Michiana.

What sets Twisted Bee apart from larger chains or corporate dispensaries is its unwavering commitment to both the community and responsible cannabis use. For the team at Twisted Bee, it's about much more than just selling products; it's about creating an educational environment where adult consumers (21 and over) can explore, learn, and engage with cannabis in a way that feels safe and welcoming.

Education Above All Else

At Twisted Bee, knowledge is a cornerstone of the customer experience. The dispensary's dedicated and knowledgeable budtenders are always on hand to offer personalized recommendations, answer questions, and guide customers through the world of cannabis. Whether you're a seasoned consumer or a first-timer, the Twisted Bee team ensures that you never feel lost in the process.

This educational approach creates a relationship of trust and transparency between the dispensary and its customers, fostering a sense of empowerment for all who walk through the door.

Community Connections: Celebrating Local Traditions

Twisted Bee's commitment to Dowagiac goes beyond its role as a business. As a proud member of the Greater Dowagiac Chamber of Commerce, the dispensary is an active participant in the community, contributing to the region's unique spirit. Whether it's joining in Dowagiac's festive parades, holiday celebrations, or local civic events, Twisted Bee strives to strengthen the fabric of the community it serves.

See TWISTED, Page C2

Michigan's secret to success

STAFF REPORT

Per capita, Michigan marijuana buyers are outspending their California counterparts more than three times over.

The difference in per capita spend between the two is exaggerated even more, as California's spend is well below the national average and Michigan's is above average.

Michigan also is selling more units of marijuana per month than other states, according to retail data from Seattle-based cannabis analytics company Headset.

Units refers to the number of items sold, no matter the form, such as an ounce of flower or a package of edibles.

Michigan surpassed California, which previously led the nation in units sold, in June 2023 by moving 18 million units of marijuana - 1 million more than California.

Since then, California units sold have stalled to roughly 17 million per month, while Michigan has continued to expand, selling a record 25 million units in May 2024.

Marijuana Tax generating $100,000,000 for Michigan municipalities

STAFF REPORT

Local governments in Michigan will typically receive nearly $58,000 for each licensed cannabis retail store and microbusiness.

•Nearly $100 million will be distributed to 302 Michigan municipalities from the state's marijuana tax revenue

•Each municipality will receive roughly $58,000 for each licensed retail store

•The money includes a first-time distribution to four federally recognized tribes

Michigan will distribute nearly $100 million in marijuana tax revenue to 302 local municipalities including cities, villages, townships, counties, and tribes. That's out of a total of more than $331 million received in the 2024 fiscal year from the state's Marijuana Regulation Fund.

The tax revenue from recreational marijuana sales is split between schools, roads and local governments. For fiscal 2024, more than $116 million was sent to the School Aid Fund for K-12 education, and an additional $116 million was deposited into the Michigan Transportation Fund.

Starting soon, Michigan will begin to distribute adult-use marijuana payments to Michigan's local units of government and tribal partners, said Rachel Eubanks, state treasurer in a recent statement. "Local entities and tribes can spend these dollars however they deem fit for their needs."

For the first time, the state is distributing more than $931,000 in marijuana tax revenue to four federally recognized tribes in Michigan, part of a change in state law.

The state has 850 retailers, nearly double the 432 in 2021. As supply has expanded, prices have plummeted: An ounce of marijuana sold for an average of $74 in 2024, down from $204 in 2021.

"For use by individuals 21 years of age or older only. Keep out of reach of children. It is illegal to drive a motor vehicle while under the influence of marijuana. National Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222."

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TWISTED

Continued from page C1

By supporting these local traditions, Twisted Bee gives back to the area in meaningful ways. This involvement not only nurtures community connections but also contributes to a thriving local economy. In a world where businesses often prioritize profit over people, Twisted Bee stands as a reminder of how a small, family-owned operation can make a big impact.

A Growing Local Staple

As cannabis culture continues to gain mainstream acceptance, Twisted Bee has positioned itself as a trusted resource in Southwest Michigan. Its dedication to high-quality recreational cannabis products, coupled with its focus on education and local engagement, has made it a go-to destination for those seeking a thoughtful, community-oriented approach to cannabis.

For many in Dowagiac and the surrounding area, Twisted Bee isn't just a dispensary — it's a symbol of responsible consumption, community involvement, and a personalized experience that larger establishments simply can't replicate. Whether you're stopping by for a quick visit or simply enjoying the vibrant spirit of Dowagiac, it's clear that Twisted Bee is more than just a business — it's a proud part of the local community and a business that's here to stay.

Twisted Bee stands as a testament to what happens when local values meet a modern industry, creating a space that's as much about community as it is about cannabis. With its commitment to education, responsible consumption, and community engagement, it's clear that Twisted Bee is not just building a business but nurturing a long-lasting legacy in Dowagiac.

EXPANSION

Continued from page C1

Local Lessons: Niles City and Buchanan

The consequences of unchecked cannabis expansion aren't just stories from distant communities—they're happening right here in our backyard.

In Niles City, Levels Cannabis entered a local strip mall with promises not to disrupt existing businesses. Yet, one by one, tenants were forced out. Among the casualties was Samuel Mancino's Italian Eatery, a cornerstone of the plaza for over a decade. In January 2023, the restaurant's owners, Paul and Brenda Thrash, were devastated to announce their closure after losing their lease to the cannabis retailer. The strip mall, once home to diverse businesses, now reflects the aggressive real estate shifts that cannabis expansion can trigger.

Next door in Buchanan, the city council is fighting an uphill battle to restore balance after downtown charm was undermined by cannabis over-saturation. The influx of dispensaries and related businesses overwhelmed the small town's infrastructure and eroded its unique identity. Only now, after the damage is done, is the city seeking to implement stricter enforcement and zoning regulations—a reactive move that comes too late to undo the harm.

What's at Stake for Niles Township?

Niles Township is a small, tight-knit community built on the strength of its local businesses and shared history. Introducing unlimited cannabis licensing risks undermining this foundation.

Real Estate Disruption: Corporate cannabis entities with deep pockets will drive up real estate prices, pushing out local residents and businesses. Our cherished establishments—like antique malls, HVAC services, nail salons, and entertainment venues like Hackers and Joey Armadillos—could be displaced, leaving the township without the diverse services that define its identity.

Strained Staffing Resources: The employee pool in our region is already scarce. Local businesses are struggling to maintain staffing levels, with some—like Walgreens—shortening hours due to a lack of employees. Adding an influx of cannabis businesses will only intensify this competition, making it harder for already struggling businesses to stay afloat.

Infrastructure Challenges: While the township does maintain a fire department and an ambulance contract, these services are sublet to other municipalities like Bertrand Township. Increased demands from a growing cannabis industry will stretch these shared resources thin, potentially compromising response times and service quality for residents.

Economic Overdependence: Communities that over-saturate with one industry risk becoming economically dependent on it, leading to instability if the market contracts.

A Broader Warning: Michigan Communities in Crisis

Niles City and Buchanan aren't alone in grappling with the fallout of unchecked cannabis expansion. New Buffalo's opt-in to unlimited licensing devastated its community, displacing chiropractors, garden centers, and storage facilities to make way for cannabis retail. Bay City, with 22 dispensaries for 33,000 residents, faces a precarious economic balance, while Battle Creek and Kalamazoo struggle to manage the effects of oversaturation. These stories are consistent: without limits, cannabis businesses can monopolize local economies, displace essential services, and leave communities vulnerable.

The Solution: Thoughtful Regulation

Regulation isn't about opposing cannabis; it's about ensuring it integrates sustainably. By capping licenses, establishing clear zoning restrictions, and requiring cannabis businesses to invest directly in community development, Niles Township can reap the benefits of cannabis legalization without sacrificing its identity.

Protecting Our Future

Cannabis is an incredible opportunity when embraced responsibly. However, the township's current plan to allow unlimited licenses prioritizes short-term revenue over long-term community stability. We owe it to ourselves and future generations to protect what makes Niles Township special.

Let's take this opportunity to learn from the cautionary tales around us and implement thoughtful regulations that ensure balanced growth. Together, we can welcome cannabis into our community without losing the heart of who we are.

Green Stem and Redemption Cannabis

Celebrating Five Years of Partnership and Social Impact

By KATIE LYNCH LINDGREN
Green Stem Provisioning

In the burgeoning cannabis industry, where businesses come and go with the shifting tides of regulation and market demands, the sustained success of Green Stem and Redemption Cannabis stands out. Both companies celebrate their fifth anniversary in 2020, a notable milestone that underscores their resilience and dedication to social responsibility. Green Stem, a family-run business based in Niles, MI, opened its doors on March 2, 2020, with Redemption Cannabis following closely in June of the same year. From the outset, these companies have been more than just business entities; they are beacons of change and pillars of their community.

Green Stem quickly distinguished itself in the market not only by offering high-quality cannabis products but also through its commitment to social justice and community support. This commitment is vividly illustrated in their partnership with Redemption Cannabis, a brand that donates an impressive 10% of its revenue to the Redemption Foundation. This foundation is fiercely dedicated to supporting those adversely affected by marijuana prohibition laws through advocacy, education, and support programs.

This partnership significantly benefits the Redemption Foundation by directing a portion of revenue towards its Commissary Program. This initiative provides essential support and resources to individuals currently incarcerated, helping to improve their daily lives and prepare for a successful reintegration into society upon release. The program reflects the foundation's deep commitment to dignity and support for those affected by incarceration.

In addition to the Commissary Program, the foundation also administers the Rick Thompson Memorial Grant. This grant is named in honor of the late cannabis activist Rick Thompson and supports educational and advocacy efforts within the cannabis community. It focuses on providing resources and funding to projects that advocate for legislative reform and public education about cannabis.

As both companies mark five years of operation, their journey through the cannabis industry has been marked by a mutual ethos of compassion and advocacy. The alignment of their opening dates has allowed them to grow in tandem, facing the cannabis market's challenges and changes together. This shared timeline has not only solidified their partnership but has also magnified their impact, enabling them to leverage collective resources for greater community benefit.

Moreover, Green Stem's proactive role in promoting Redemption Cannabis products educates and empowers its customers. Every purchase becomes a contribution to a larger cause, helping to weave social responsibility into the fabric of daily business operations. Green Stem's customers are thus not just buying a product; they are endorsing a model of business that prioritizes community and social equity.

The ongoing collaboration between Green Stem and Redemption Cannabis also highlights the importance of family and community in the business strategies of both entities. As a family-owned business, Green Stem places a high value on relationships and community ties, which resonate deeply within their operational decisions. This synergy enhances their partnership with Redemption Cannabis, making their joint efforts a potent force for advocacy and social change.

The fifth anniversary of these companies is more than a celebration of business success; it is a reaffirmation of their commitment to social causes. It is an opportunity to reflect on the progress made and the lives touched by their concerted efforts. The anniversary also serves as a platform for both companies to renew their commitment to healing and supporting their community, promising continued efforts toward a more equitable society.

As the cannabis industry continues to evolve, Green Stem and Redemption Cannabis stand ready to adapt and innovate while staying true to their foundational values of justice and community support. This adaptability, coupled with a steadfast dedication to their social mission, positions them well for future challenges and opportunities.

And, as Green Stem and Redemption Cannabis celebrate five years of successful operation and partnership, they not only reflect on a journey marked by significant achievements but also look forward to new initiatives that will continue to support their community and advance social justice. Their story is a powerful reminder of how businesses can thrive while making a profound impact on society, setting a standard for corporate responsibility and community engagement in the cannabis industry and beyond.

"For use by individuals 21 years of age or older only. Keep out of reach of children. It is illegal to drive a motor vehicle while under the influence of marijuana. National Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222."

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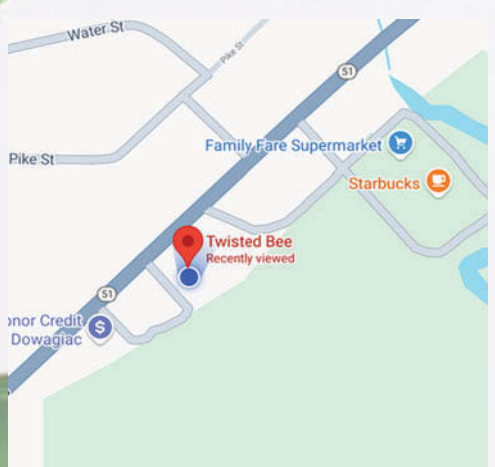
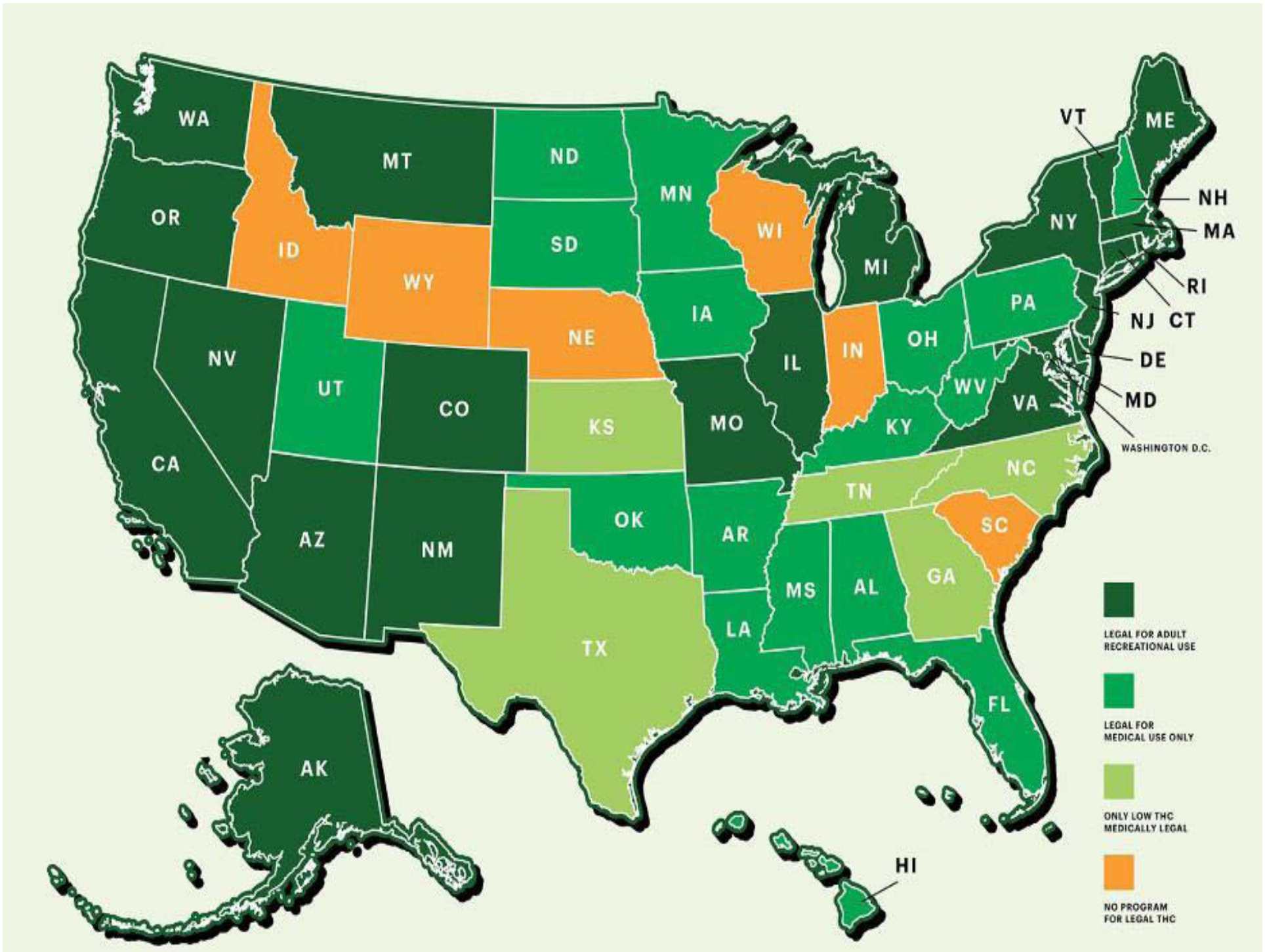


View our menu online



Since the beginning of 2020, Michigan's licensed cannabis retailers have reported more than $9.2 billion in sales, including $7.9 billion in adult-use transactions and $1.3 billion in medical purchases, as the nation's second-largest cannabis market. This is only bested by California, where customers have spent more than $22 billion on cannabis since the beginning of 2020, according to the state's tax department.

Michigan	Adult-Use	Medical	Combined
*2024	$1,062,622,447.25	$8,616,360.50	$1,071,238,807.75
2023	$2,976,405,285.58	$80,755,727.17	$3,057,161,012.75
2022	$2,037,806,713.50	$256,017,176.61	$2,293,823,890.11
2021	$1,311,951,737.68	$481,225,540.73	$1,793,177,278.41
2020	$510,658,439.04	$474,029,956.27	$984,688,395.31
Total	$7,899,444,623.05	$1,300,644,761.28	$9,200,089,384.33

***Sales through April 30, 2024**

MEDICAL MARIJUANA REGISTRY FOR MICHIGAN

Nature of the Debilitating Medical Conditions of the Qualifying Patients. As of February 28, 2025.

Condition	Percent of Total
Agitation of Alzheimer's Disease	0.00
AIDS	0.05
Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis	0.05
Arthritis	18.88
Autism	0.78
Cachexia or Wasting Syndrome	0.31
Cancer	3.27
Cerebral Palsy	0.21
Chronic Pain	60.94
Colitis	0.47
Crohn's Disease	0.47
Glaucoma	0.62
Hepatitis C	0.88
HIV Positive	0.41
Inflammatory Bowel Disease	0.88
Muscle Spasms	6.95
Nail Patella	0.05
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder	2.23
Parkinson's Disease	0.05
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	11.88
Rheumatoid Arthritis	1.04
Seizures	1.40
Severe and Chronic Pain	44.40
Severe Nausea	6.33
Spinal Cord Injury	0.47
Tourette's Syndrome	0.05
Ulcerative Colitis	0.41

Source: Cannabis Regulatory Commission

KEY US STATISTICS ON USAGE

•47% of Americans have tried cannabis.

•79% of Americans live in a county with at least one dispensary.

•There are 440,445 full-time equivalent jobs supported by legal cannabis.

•The US cannabis industry is expected to reach almost $45 billion in 2025.

•More than 1 in 3 women over 21 consume cannabis.

•Cannabis added approximately $115.2 billion to the economy in 2024.

•Adult-use cannabis is now legal in 24 states.

•Support for legalizing cannabis hit a record 88%.

•Ranks of women and minority cannabis executives are rebounding.

•14% of consumers use cannabis to help them exercise.

•Cannabis tax revenue is $20 billion, nearly double that of alcohol.

•Average retail cannabis prices have dropped -32% since 2021.

•Dispensaries accepting debit earns an average of $4,627 more than cash-only retailers.

15% of Americans identified as "current users"

The most recent data from Gallup (combined from 2023 and 2024) , shows that 15% of Americans are active marijuana users, which is up slightly (from 14% in 2021-2022).

In 2021, the number of people who use marijuana began slightly increasing, and we see that trend continuing in 2025.

Marijuana usage statistics

Nearly half of Americans have tried cannabis

According to Gallup, 47% of Americans say they have tried marijuana at some time.

64% of consumers use cannabis to relax

•59% of consumers use cannabis for stress relief

•52% use cannabis to reduce anxiety

•48% of consumers turn to cannabis for pain management

•45% use cannabis to improve sleep quality

•45% say cannabis helps them fall asleep

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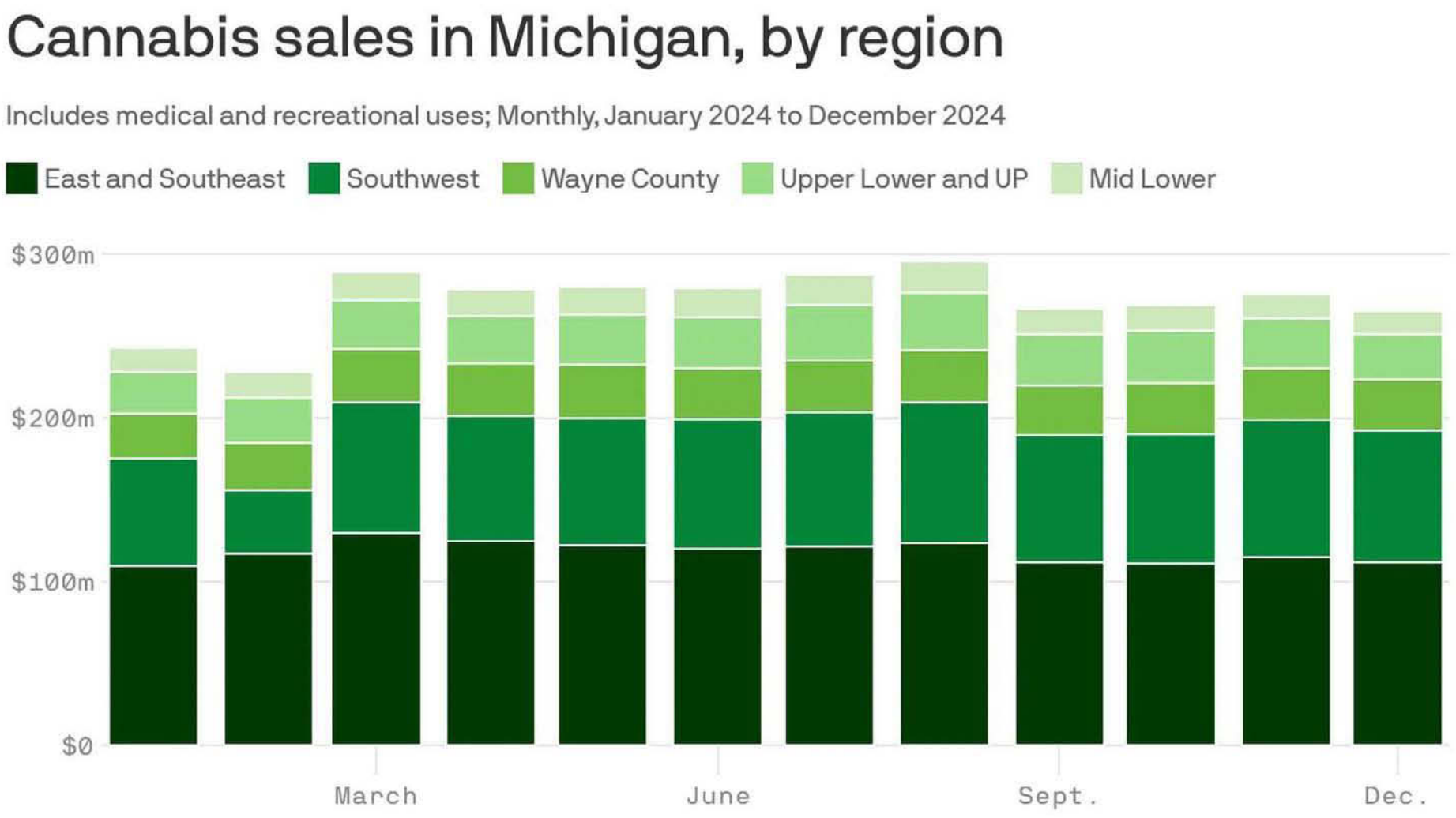


More than 1 in 3 American women consume cannabis

STAFF REPORT

Data shows that more than 1 in 3 women consume cannabis in the U.S., which means there are more female cannabis consumers than male.

Cannabis brands are beginning to notice this trend and are investing more heavily in this demographic.

Retailers say they are refocusing shelf space toward products women tend to purchase, like topicals, edibles, tinctures, and beverages.

The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse found that, for the first time, women surpassed men of the same age in cannabis consumption in 2023.

Reuters reported that women also comprise 55% of the user base on Jointly, a consumer-focused cannabis product discovery app with over half a million users.

Men and women consume cannabis differently and for different reasons

29% of female consumers prefer non-flower products, while 15% of men prefer the same.

•27% of men prefer to consume flower

•Just 19% of women say flower is their preference

•59% of men and 52% of women prefer flower and non-flower

Court: "Smell of Marijuana is NOT probable cause"

STAFF REPORT

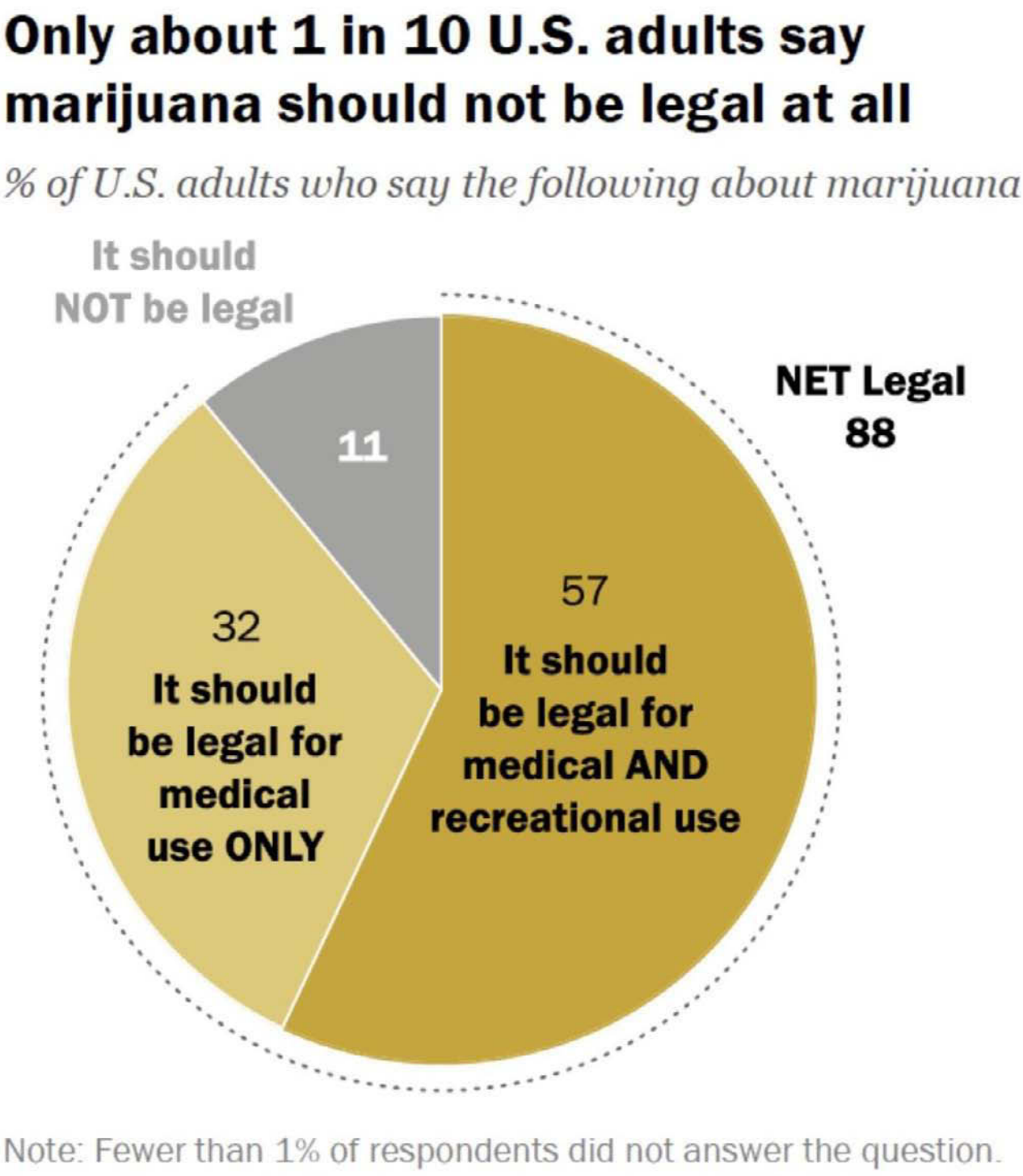
Michigan Supreme Court ruled that since Cannabis is legal to purchase in the state for adults, law enforcement cannot justify searching an individual even if they can smell it.

Law enforcement can no longer use the smell of marijuana as probable cause to investigate someone or someone's vehicle

· The Michigan Supreme Court ruled that a Detroit man's arrest after police found a firearm in a vehicle was unlawful

· Police spotted the weapon after having the man exit the vehicle because they reported smelling weed

The case stems from a Detroit man's arrest in October 2020 when, during a routine compliance check, a police officer observed the smell of marijuana coming from a vehicle. The officer asked the man if he had been smoking marijuana, which he denied. They asked him to exit the vehicle, put him in handcuffs and patted him down. Another officer observed a black handgun under the front passenger seat, leading to the man's arrest and being charged with carrying a concealed weapon, being a felon in possession of a firearm, and possession of a firearm during the commission of a felony. However, a trial court ruled that because the handgun was not visible at the time of the initial marijuana odor, the arresting officer's justification for having the individual step out of the vehicle due to the smell of marijuana did not amount to probable cause. In the latest ruling, five justices said the smell of marijuana alone was no longer sufficient.


Only about 1 in 10 U.S. adults say marijuana should not be legal at all
% of U.S. adults who say the following about marijuana
It should NOT be legal
11
NET Legal
88
32
It should be legal for medical use ONLY
57
It should be legal for medical AND recreational use
Note: Fewer than 1% of respondents did not answer the question.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 16-21, 2024.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Cannabis shoppers are researching online before they buy

STAFF REPORT

A recent data dive from BDSA explores the actions dispensary shoppers take before they buy. The report found frequent cannabis shoppers are more likely to prepare for a purchase by researching online.

42% of frequent dispensary shoppers report going online to see the menu at a specific dispensary. This "regular shopper" cohort was also more likely to look for deals and promotions (30% of weekly shoppers compared to 17% of less than monthly shoppers).

The BDSA report also shows planning for purchases differs based on how much consumers spend. Shoppers in the top 25th percentile of per-visit-spending do more online research before replenishing (42% report checking dispensary menus).

In 2024, easily accessible dispensary websites will become increasingly important. Retailers can lean on these cohorts of "researcher-first buyers" by optimizing product pages to rank higher on Google.

39% of consumers say they give cannabis to friends and family

STAFF REPORT

Cannabis acceptance is on the rise, and nothing proves it more than 39% of consumers saying they give cannabis products to friends and family.

- 93% of cannabis consumers say their friends know they consume
- 89% of cannabis consumers say their family knows they consume
- 59% of consumers say friends and family are generally supportive of their consumption
- 26% of cannabis consumers say cannabis is sometimes part of holiday gatherings with family

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